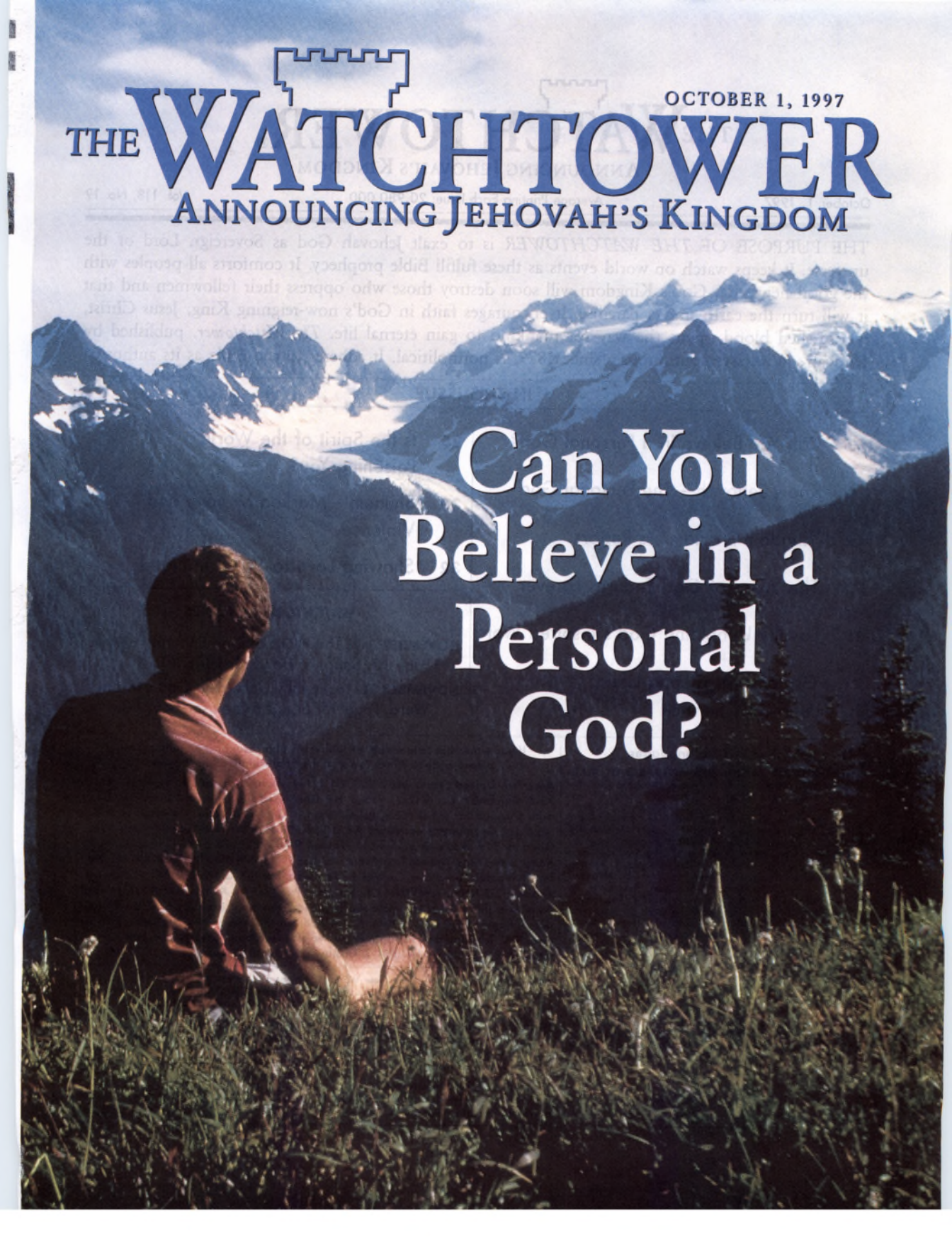


A man with short brown hair, wearing a red and white striped shirt, is sitting on a grassy hill in the foreground, looking out over a vast mountain range. The mountains are covered in snow and have jagged peaks. The sky is blue with some light clouds. The overall scene is peaceful and majestic.

THE WATCHTOWER

OCTOBER 1, 1997

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

Can You
Believe in a
Personal
God?

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

October 1, 1997

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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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Can You Believe in a Personal God?



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The card asked "Why?"

“YOU don’t need to believe in God to be a Christian . . . We are part of a revolution now, but in the 21st century the church will be without a God in the traditional sense,” explained a senior British university chaplain. He was speaking on behalf of the Sea of Faith movement to which at least one hundred British priests subscribe. These “Christian atheists” contend that religion is a creation of men and that, as one member put it, God is just “an idea.” A supernatural God no longer fits into their way of thinking.

“God is dead” was a popular slogan in the 1960’s. It reflected views of the 19th-century German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche and gave many young people the excuse they wanted to do their own thing, to indulge in free love and drug abuse without moral restraint. But did such freedom lead the flower children, as they became known, to a more satisfying life of happiness?

In the same decade, Anglican bishop John A. T. Robinson published his controversial book *Honest to God*. Many of his fellow clerics took him to task for thinking of God “as no more than a dimension of depth in human experience.” Theology professor Keith Ward asked: “Is belief in God some sort of outmoded superstition, now discarded by the wise?” Answering his own question, he said: “Nothing is more important in religion today than to recover a knowledge of the traditional idea of God.”

Suffering and a Personal God

Many who believe in a personal God find it difficult to relate their belief to the tragedies and suffering they see. For example, in March 1996, 16 young children, along with their teacher, were gunned down and killed in Dunblane, Scotland. “I just don’t understand the will of God,” said one distraught

woman. The anguish of the tragedy was expressed on a card left with flowers outside the children's school. It carried one word, "WHY?" In answer the minister of Dunblane Cathedral said: "There can be no explanation. We cannot answer why this should have happened."

Later the same year, a popular young Church of England clergyman was brutally killed. The *Church Times* reported that a

stunned congregation heard the archdeacon of Liverpool speak of "hammering at God's door with questions of why? why?" This cleric also had no words of comfort from a personal God.

What, then, are we to believe? It is rational to believe in a personal God. It is the key to answering the compelling questions raised above. We invite you to consider the evidence presented in the following article.

Know Jehovah

The Personal God

COMPARING the Hindu concept of God with that of other systems of religion, Dr. Radhakrishnan of India observes: "The God of Hebrews is of a different type. He is personal and active in history and interested in the changes and chances of this developing world. He is a Being who communicates with us."

The Hebrew name for the God of the Bible is יהוה, commonly translated "Jehovah." He transcends all other gods. What do we know about him? How did he deal with men in Bible times?

Jehovah and Moses "Face to Face"

"Face to face" intimacy existed between Jehovah and his servant Moses, even though Moses could not literally see God. (Deuteronomy 34:10; Exodus 33:20) In his youth, Moses' heart was with the Israelites, who were at that time enslaved in Egypt. He turned his back on his life as a mem-

ber of Pharaoh's household, "choosing to be ill-treated with the people of God." (Hebrews 11:25) As a result, Jehovah gave Moses many special privileges.

As a member of Pharaoh's household, "Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians." (Acts 7:22) But to lead the nation of Israel, he also needed to cultivate the qualities of humility, patience, and meekness. This he did during his 40 years as a shepherd in Midian. (Exodus 2:15-22; Numbers 12:3) Jehovah, although remaining invisible, revealed himself and his purpose to Moses, and through angels God entrusted the Ten Commandments to him. (Exodus 3:1-10; 19:3-20:20; Acts 7:53; Hebrews 11:27) The Bible tells us that "Jehovah spoke to Moses face to face, just as a man would speak to his fellow." (Exodus 33:11) Indeed, Jehovah himself said: "Mouth to mouth I speak to him." What a precious,

personal relationship Moses enjoyed with his invisible but personal God!—Numbers 12:8.

In addition to the early history of the nation of Israel, Moses recorded the Law code with all its ramifications. He was also entrusted with another priceless privilege—that of writing the book of Genesis. The latter part of that book was history accurately known within his own family and therefore relatively easy to record. But from where did Moses get the details of man's earliest history? It is possible that Moses possessed ancient written documents, preserved by his forefathers, to use as source material. On the other hand, he could have received details through oral transmission or directly by divine revelation from Jehovah. Reverential men of all ages have long acknowledged the personal relationship that Moses enjoyed with his God in this regard.

Jehovah—Elijah's Personal God

The prophet Elijah also knew Jehovah as a personal God. Elijah was zealous for pure worship and served Jehovah despite becoming the target of great hatred and opposition from the worshipers of Baal, the chief god of the Canaanite pantheon.—1 Kings 18:17-40.

Ahab, King of Israel, and his wife, Jezebel, sought to kill Elijah. Fearing for his life, Elijah fled to Beer-sheba, west of the Dead Sea. There he wandered into the wilderness and prayed to die. (1 Kings 19:1-4) Had Jehovah abandoned Elijah? Was He no longer interested in his faithful servant? Elijah may have thought so, but how wrong he was! Later, Jehovah quietly spoke to him, asking: "What is your business here, Elijah?" After a dramatic demonstration of supernatural power, "there was a voice for

him, and it proceeded to say to him [again]: 'What is your business here, Elijah?'" Jehovah manifested this personal interest in Elijah in order to encourage his trustworthy servant. God had more work for him to do, and Elijah eagerly responded to that call! Elijah faithfully fulfilled his assignments, sanctifying the name of Jehovah, his personal God.—1 Kings 19:9-18.

Following his rejection of the nation of Israel, Jehovah no longer spoke personally to his servants on earth. This did not mean that his personal interest in them had waned. By means of his holy spirit, he still directed and strengthened them in his service. Take, for example, the apostle Paul, formerly known as Saul.

Paul's Direction by Holy Spirit

Saul came from Tarsus, a prominent city of Cilicia. His parents were Hebrews, but he was born a Roman citizen. Saul's upbringing, however, was according to the strict tenets of the Pharisees. Later, in Jerusalem, he had the opportunity to be educated "at the feet of Gamaliel," a prominent teacher of the Law.—Acts 22:3, 26-28.

On account of Saul's misguided zeal for Jewish tradition, he became party to a vicious campaign directed against the followers of Jesus Christ. He even approved the murder of Stephen, the first Christian martyr. (Acts 7:58-60; 8:1, 3) Later he admitted that although he was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and an insolent man, "[he] was shown mercy, because [he] was ignorant and acted with a lack of faith."—1 Timothy 1:13.

Saul was motivated by a genuine desire to serve God. Following Saul's conversion on the road to Damascus, Jehovah used him mightily. Ananias, an early Christian disciple, was directed by the risen Christ to help

him. Thereafter Paul (the Roman name by which Saul became known as a Christian) was guided by Jehovah's holy spirit to accomplish a long and fruitful ministry throughout parts of Europe and Asia Minor.—Acts 13:2-5; 16:9, 10.

Can the same direction by holy spirit be identified today? Yes, it can.

Atheism No Bar to Jehovah's Personal Interest

Joseph F. Rutherford was the second president of the Watch Tower Society. He was baptized in 1906 as a Bible Student—the designation Jehovah's Witnesses were then known by—was appointed the Society's legal counsel the following year, and became its president in January 1917. Yet, at one time this young lawyer was an atheist. How did he become such a motivated Christian servant of Jehovah?

In July 1913, Rutherford served as chairman of an International Bible Students Association convention held in Springfield, Massachusetts, U.S.A. A reporter from the local newspaper, *The Homestead*, interviewed Rutherford, and the account was reprinted in the souvenir report of that convention.

Rutherford explained that at the time he planned to marry, his religious views were those of the Baptist denomination, but those of his wife-to-be were Presbyterian. When Rutherford's pastor said that "she was going to hell fire because she had not been immersed and that he was going straight to heaven because he had been, his logical mind revolted and he became an atheist."

It took Rutherford several years of careful research to rebuild his faith in a personal God. He worked, he said, from the premise that "that which cannot satisfy the

mind has no right to satisfy the heart." Christians "must be sure that the Scriptures in which they believe are true," Rutherford explained, adding: "They must know the foundation on which they stand."—See 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

Yes, it is possible even today for an atheist or an agnostic to search the Scriptures, build up faith, and develop a strong personal relationship with Jehovah God. After a careful study of the Bible with the aid of the Watch Tower publication *Knowledge That Leads to Everlasting Life*, one young man confessed: "I did not believe in God when I started this study, but now I find that knowledge of the Bible has turned my whole thinking around. I am beginning to know Jehovah and to trust in him."

"The Fool" and God

"It never occurred to any writer of the OT [Hebrew Scriptures] to prove or argue the existence of God," says Dr. James Hastings in *A Dictionary of the Bible*. "It is not according to the spirit of the ancient world in general to deny the existence of God, or to use arguments to prove it. The belief was one natural to the human mind and common to all men." This does not mean, of course, that all men at that time were God-fearing. Far from it. Psalm 14:1 and 53:1 both mention "the senseless one," or as the *King James Version* says, "the fool," who has said in his heart, "There is no Jehovah."

What kind of person is this fool, the man who denies the existence of God? He is not *intellectually* ignorant. Rather, the Hebrew word *na-val'* points to a *moral* deficiency. Professor S. R. Driver, in his notes to *The Parallel Psalter*, says that the fault is "not weakness of reason, but moral and religious insensibility, an invincible lack of sense, or perception."



From *The Holy Bible* by J. Baskett, Oxford

An 18th-century engraving that depicts Moses writing Genesis 1:1 under inspiration

The psalmist goes on to describe the moral breakdown that is a result of such an attitude: "They have acted ruinously, they have acted detestably in their dealing. There is no one doing good." (Psalm 14:1) Dr. Hastings sums up: "Counting on this absence of God from the world and on impunity, men become corrupt and do abom-

inable deeds." They openly embrace ungodly principles and discount a personal God to whom they have no wish to be accountable. But such thinking is as foolish and senseless today as it was when the psalmist wrote his words over 3,000 years ago.

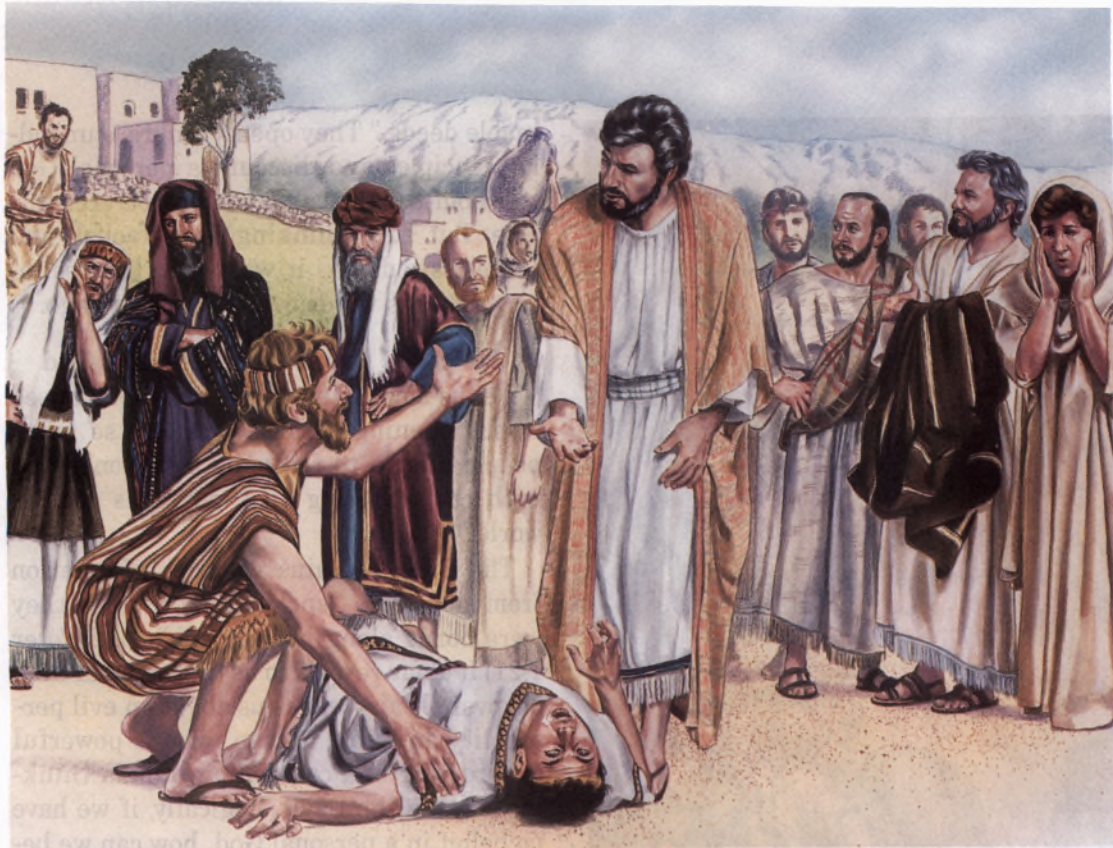
Warnings From Our Personal God

Let us now return to the questions raised in our opening article. Why are so many people unable to reconcile a personal God with the suffering that pervades today's world?

The Bible contains written information from men who "spoke from God as they were borne along by holy spirit." (2 Peter 1:21) It alone reveals to us the personal God, Jehovah. It also warns us about an evil personality, invisible to men, who is powerful in directing and controlling human thinking—Satan the Devil. Logically, if we have no belief in a personal God, how can we believe that there is also a personal Devil, or Satan?

Under inspiration the apostle John wrote: "The one called Devil and Satan . . . is misleading the entire inhabited earth." (Revelation 12:9) Later John said: "We know we originate with God, but the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one." (1 John 5:19) These statements reflect the words of Jesus, which words John himself recorded in his Gospel: "The ruler of the world is coming. And he has no hold on me."—John 14:30.

How remote this Scriptural teaching is from what people now believe! "Talk of the Devil is distinctly unfashionable today. Our sceptical and scientific age, has pensioned off Satan," says the *Catholic Herald*. Yet, Jesus forcefully said to those men who had murderous intent toward him: "You are



Jesus Christ overpowered the demons many times

from your father the Devil, and you wish to do the desires of your father.”—John 8:44.

The Bible’s explanation of Satan’s power makes sense. It clarifies why, despite the desire of the majority of people to live in peace and harmony, the world is plagued with hatred, wars, and senseless violence, as demonstrated at Dunblane (mentioned on pages 3 and 4). Moreover, Satan is not a lone enemy with whom we must contend. The Bible gives additional warnings concerning devils, or demons—wicked spirit creatures who long ago joined forces with Satan to mislead and abuse mankind. (Jude 6) Jesus Christ faced the pow-

er of these spirits many times, and he was able to overpower them.—Matthew 12:22-24; Luke 9:37-43.

The true God, Jehovah, has purposed to cleanse this earth of wickedness and finally stamp out the activities of both Satan and his demons. Based on our knowledge of Jehovah, we can have firm faith and trust in his promises. He says: “Before me there was no God formed, and after me there continued to be none. I—I am Jehovah, and besides me there is no savior.” Jehovah truly is a personal God to all who know, worship, and serve him. We can look to him, and him alone, for our salvation.—Isaiah 43:10, 11.

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

Overcoming Challenges in "the Land of the Unexpected"

THE apostle Paul asked first-century Christians in Corinth: "If the trumpet sounds an indistinct call, who will get ready for battle? In the same way also, unless you through the tongue utter speech easily understood, how will it be known what is being spoken?"—1 Corinthians 14:8, 9.

In Papua New Guinea, sometimes called the Land of the Unexpected, Jehovah's Witnesses encounter daunting obstacles in sounding forth the clear message of the Bible. They preach to people who speak over 700 different languages and who have a wide variety of customs. The Witnesses also contend with mountainous terrain, a lack of roads, and increasing crime. Besides all these difficulties, there is opposition from certain religious groups and, at times, even from school officials.

Nevertheless, good spiritual instruction and a growing library of Bible study aids in local languages are equipping the Witnesses to convey the good news as a distinct trumpet call. Often the response is positive, as the following reports show:

- At the start of a new school year, a teacher wanted to know why the children of Jehovah's Witnesses do not salute the flag or sing the national anthem. He directed his question to Maiola, a 13-year-old student who is a baptized Witness. Maiola gave a clear, Scripturally based explanation. The teacher accepted her reasoning since it was from the Bible. Her explanation was also shared with the rest of the school staff.

Later, when the students were assigned to write essays, Maiola chose the subject of the Trinity. Her essay received the highest marks in the class, and the teacher asked her where she had found the information. She showed him the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* in the English language. The teacher proceeded to present the book to the entire class, and many wanted a copy of their own. The next day, Maiola placed



14 books and 7 magazines with her schoolmates, and she started Bible studies with three of them. Maiola's goal is to become a full-time minister.

- An isolated group of Jehovah's Witnesses in a coastal village near Port Moresby has faced opposition since the early 1970's. Recently, however, they received help from an unexpected source. The bishop of the United Church there, a native of Papua New Guinea who was educated overseas, invited questions from the audience at church one day. A man inquired: "There are two religions in our village—the United Church and Jehovah's Witnesses. What should we do when the Witnesses come to our door?" After a long pause, the bishop replied: "You know, I really don't know what to tell you. Recently, two young Witnesses came to my door. They asked me a question, and with all my university training, I didn't know the answer. But they easily gave me the answer from the Bible. So I'm not going to tell you what to do—I'll leave it up to you. You don't have to listen if you don't want to, but don't be violent with them."

A traveling representative of the Watch Tower Society who later visited this group of Witnesses reported: "Almost everyone in the village listened to the Witnesses when they went preaching. Some even invited them into their homes. It is a paradise for preaching now."



THE WORD OF GOD ENDURES FOREVER

“As for the word of our God, it will last to time indefinite.”—ISAIAH 40:8.

HUMANS are prone to put their trust in the promises of prominent men and women. But no matter how desirable these promises may seem to people who long for improvement in their lot in life, they are like wilting flowers when compared with the word of our God. (Psalm 146:3, 4) Over 2,700 years ago, Jehovah God inspired the prophet Isaiah to write: “All flesh is green grass, and all their loving-kindness is like the blossom of the field. . . . The green grass has dried up, the blossom has withered; but as for the word of our God,

it will last to time indefinite.” (Isaiah 40: 6, 8) What is that enduring “word”? It is God’s statement of his purpose. Today we have that “word” in written form in the Bible.—1 Peter 1:24, 25.

² People living in the days of ancient Israel experienced the truthfulness of what Isaiah recorded. Through his prophets Jehovah foretold that, because of gross unfaithfulness to him, first the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel and then the two-tribe kingdom of Judah would be taken into exile. (Jeremiah 20:4; Amos 5:2, 27) Though they persecut-

1. (a) What is meant here by “the word of our God”? (b) How do the promises of humans compare with the word of God?

2. In the face of what attitudes and actions did Jehovah fulfill his word regarding ancient Israel and Judah?

ed, even killed, Jehovah's prophets, burned a scroll that contained God's message of warning, and appealed to Egypt for military help to prevent its fulfillment, Jehovah's word did not fail. (Jeremiah 36:1, 2, 21-24; 37:5-10; Luke 13:34) Further, God's promise to restore a repentant Jewish remnant to their land had a remarkable fulfillment.—Isaiah, chapter 35.

³ Through Isaiah, Jehovah also foretold righteous rulership over mankind by means of the Messiah, deliverance from sin and death, and the transforming of the earth into a paradise. (Isaiah 9:6, 7; 11:1-9; 25:6-8; 35:5-7; 65:17-25) Will these things also come to pass? Without a shadow of doubt! "God . . . cannot lie." He had his prophetic word recorded for our benefit, and he has made sure that it has been preserved.—Titus 1:2; Romans 15:4.

⁴ Jehovah did not preserve the original manuscripts in which his ancient penmen wrote those prophecies. But his "word," his declared purpose, has proved to be a living word. That purpose moves irresistibly forward, and as it does, the inner thoughts and motivations of people whose lives are touched by it become manifest. (Hebrews 4:12) Furthermore, the historical record shows that the preservation and the translation of the inspired Scriptures themselves have been by divine providence.

When Faced With Attempts to Suppress It

⁵ On more than one occasion, rulers have

3. (a) What promises recorded by Isaiah are of special interest to us? (b) Why are you convinced that these things will really come to pass?

4. Even though original Bible manuscripts were not preserved, how is it true that God's word is "alive"?

5. (a) What effort was made by a Syrian king to destroy the inspired Hebrew Scriptures? (b) Why did he fail?

endeavored to destroy the inspired writings. In 168 B.C.E., Syrian King Antiochus Epiphanes (depicted on page 10) erected an altar to Zeus in the temple that was dedicated to Jehovah. He also sought out 'the books of the Law,' burned them, and declared that anyone possessing such Scriptures would be put to death. Regardless of how many copies he burned in Jerusalem and Judea, he could not entirely suppress the Scriptures. Colonies of Jews were at that time scattered in many lands, and each synagogue had its collection of scrolls.—Compare Acts 13:14, 15.

⁶ In 303 C.E., Roman Emperor Diocletian similarly decreed that Christian meeting places be razed and that their 'Scriptures be consumed with fire.' Such destruction continued for a decade. Terrible though the persecution was, Diocletian did not succeed in stamping out Christianity, nor did God permit the agents of the emperor to destroy all the copies of even one portion of His inspired Word. But by their reaction to the distribution and preaching of God's Word, the opposers manifested what was in their hearts. They identified themselves as men blinded by Satan and carrying out his will.—John 8:44; 1 John 3:10-12.

⁷ Efforts to stifle the spread of Bible knowledge also took other forms. When Latin died out as an everyday language, it was not pagan rulers but professed Christians—Pope Gregory VII (1073-85) and Pope Innocent III (1198-1216)—who actively opposed translation of the Bible into languages used by the common people. In an effort to crush dissent against the authority of the church,

6. (a) What intense effort was made to destroy the Scriptures used by the early Christians? (b) What was the outcome?

7. (a) What efforts were made to stifle the spread of Bible knowledge in western Europe? (b) What was accomplished in the translating and publishing of the Bible?

Do We Really Know What the Bible Originally Said?

About 6,000 handwritten Hebrew manuscripts attest to the contents of the **Hebrew Scriptures**. A few of these date back to the pre-Christian era. At least 19 extant manuscripts of the complete Hebrew Scriptures date to the period before the invention of printing from movable type. In addition, from that same period, there exist translations that were made

into 28 other languages.

For the **Christian Greek Scriptures**, about 5,000 manuscripts in Greek have been cataloged. One of these has been dated as before 125 C.E., thus just a few years after the time of original writing. And some fragments are thought to date considerably earlier. For 22 of the 27 inspired books, there are from 10 to 19 com-

plete uncial manuscripts. The smallest number of complete uncial manuscripts for any of the books in this part of the Bible is three—for Revelation. One manuscript of the complete Christian Greek Scriptures dates back to the fourth century C.E.

No other ancient literature is confirmed by such a flood of ancient documentary evidence.

the Roman Catholic Council of Toulouse, France, in 1229, decreed that a layman could not possess books of the Bible in the common language. The Inquisition was used aggressively to enforce the decree. Yet, after 400 years of the Inquisition, lovers of God's Word had translated the complete Bible and were circulating printed editions of it in some 20 languages, plus additional dialects, and major portions of it in another 16 tongues.

⁸It was not only the Roman Catholic Church that endeavored to keep the Bible from the common people. Early in the 19th century, Pavsky, a professor at the St. Petersburg Academy of Divinity, translated the Gospel of Matthew from Greek into Russian. Other books of the Christian Greek Scriptures were also translated into Russian, and Pavsky served as editor. These were extensively distributed until, by ecclesiastical maneuvering, in 1826 the czar was

8. During the 19th century, what was happening in the field of Bible translation and distribution in Russia?

induced to have the Russian Bible Society placed under the management of the "Holy Synod" of the Russian Orthodox Church, which then effectively suppressed its operations. Later, Pavsky translated the Hebrew Scriptures from Hebrew into Russian. At about the same time, Makarios, an archimandrite of the Orthodox Church, also translated the Hebrew Scriptures from Hebrew into Russian. Both of them were punished for their efforts, and their translations were put into church archives. The church was determined to keep the Bible in the old Slavonic language, which at that time was not read or understood by the common people. Only when the people's efforts to gain Bible knowledge could no longer be suppressed did the "Holy Synod," in 1856, undertake its own synodal translation, doing so with guidelines that were carefully crafted to ensure that expressions used would conform to church views. Thus, in connection with dissemination of God's Word, a division was being made manifest between the outward appearance of the religious leaders

and their spirit, as revealed by their words and actions.—2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4.

Safeguarding the Word Against Corruption

⁹ Among those who translated and copied the Scriptures were men who truly loved God's Word and put forth earnest efforts to make it available to everyone. William Tyndale was martyred (in 1536) for what he did to make the Bible available in English. Francisco de Enzinas was imprisoned by the Catholic Inquisition (after 1544) for translating and publishing the Christian Greek Scriptures in Spanish. At the risk of his life, Robert Morrison (from 1807 to 1818) translated the Bible into Chinese.

¹⁰ At times, however, considerations other than love for God's Word influenced the work of copyists and translators. Consider four examples: (1) The Samaritans built a temple on Mount Gerizim as a rival to the temple in Jerusalem. In support of that, an interpolation was made in the Samaritan Pentateuch at Exodus 20:17. The command was added, as if part of the Decalogue, to build an altar of stone on Mount Gerizim and to offer sacrifices there. (2) The person who first translated the book of Daniel for the Greek *Septuagint* took liberties in his renderings. He inserted statements that he thought would explain or enhance what was in the Hebrew text. He omitted details that he thought would be unacceptable to readers. When he translated the prophecy concerning the time of Messiah's appearance, found at Daniel 9:24-27, he falsified the stated time period and added, altered, and transposed words, apparently with a view to making the prophecy seem to

support the struggle of the Maccabees. (3) In the fourth century C.E., in a Latin treatise, an overzealous advocate of Trinitarianism evidently included the words "in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the holy spirit; and these three are one" as if these were a quotation from 1 John 5:7. Later that passage was put right into the text of a Latin Bible manuscript. (4) Louis XIII (1610-43), in France, authorized Jacques Corbin to translate the Bible into French in order to offset the efforts of Protestants. With that objective in view, Corbin included some textual interpolations, including reference to "the holy sacrifice of the Mass" at Acts 13:2.

¹¹ Jehovah did not prevent such tampering with his Word, nor did it change his purpose. What effects did it have? Adding references to Mount Gerizim did not cause the Samaritan religion to become God's agency for blessing mankind. Rather, it gave evidence that, although the Samaritan religion claimed to believe the Pentateuch, it could not be counted on to teach the truth. (John 4:20-24) Distortion of wording in the *Septuagint* did not prevent the Messiah from coming at the time foretold through the prophet Daniel. Furthermore, even though the *Septuagint* was in use in the first century, the Jews were evidently accustomed to hearing the Scriptures read in Hebrew in their synagogues. As a result, "the people were in expectation" when the time for fulfillment of the prophecy drew near. (Luke 3:15) As for the interpolations at 1 John 5:7 to support the Trinity and at Acts 13:2 to justify the Mass, these did not change what is truth. And in time the frauds were fully exposed. The large reservoir of original-language manuscripts of the Bible provides

9. How did some Bible translators demonstrate their love for God's Word?

10. What examples show that there were translators who were motivated by influences other than love for God's Word?

11. (a) How did the Word of God endure in spite of the dishonesty of some translators? (b) How much ancient manuscript evidence is there to prove what the Bible originally said? (See box.)

a means for checking the validity of any translation.

¹² Other efforts to change the Scriptures involved more than rewording a few verses. These constituted an attack on the identity of the true God himself. The very nature and extent of the changes gave clear evidence of influence from a source more powerful than any individual man or human organization—yes, influence from Jehovah's archenemy, Satan the Devil. Yielding to that influence, translators and copyists—some eagerly, others reluctantly—began to remove God's own personal name, Jehovah, from his inspired Word in the thousands of places where it appeared. At an early date, some translations from Hebrew into Greek, Latin, German, English, Italian, and Dutch, among others, omitted the divine name entirely or retained it in only a few places. It was also taken out of copies of the Christian Greek Scriptures.

¹³ Yet, that glorious name was not blotted out from human memory. Translations

12. (a) What serious changes were made by some Bible translators? (b) How far-reaching were these?

13. Why did the widespread effort to alter the Bible not result in the blotting out of God's name from human memory?

Do You Remember?

- ☐ What is "the word of our God" that endures forever?
- ☐ What attempts have been made to suppress the Bible, and with what results?
- ☐ How has the integrity of the Bible been safeguarded?
- ☐ How has God's statement of purpose proved to be a living word?

of the Hebrew Scriptures into Spanish, Portuguese, German, English, French, and many others, honestly included God's personal name. By the 16th century, the personal name of God also began to appear again in various Hebrew translations of the Christian Greek Scriptures; by the 18th century, in German; by the 19th century, in Croatian and English. Even though people might try to push God's name into a corner, when "Jehovah's day" arrives, then, as God declares, 'the nations will have to know that I am Jehovah.' That declared purpose of God will not fail.—2 Peter 3:10; Ezekiel 38:23; Isaiah 11:9; 55:11.

Message Reaches Around the Globe

¹⁴ By the dawn of the 20th century, the Bible was already being printed in 94 languages of Europe. It alerted Bible students in that part of the world to the fact that world-shaking events would come with the end of the Gentile Times in 1914, and indeed they did! (Luke 21:24) Before the epoch-making year 1914 had run its course, the Bible, either the whole or some books of it, was published in 157 languages of Africa, in addition to the widely used English, French, and Portuguese languages. Thus the foundation was laid for teaching spiritually liberating Bible truths to humble ones of the many tribes and national groups living there.

¹⁵ As the world entered the foretold last days, the Bible was widely available in the Americas. Immigrants from Europe had brought it with them in all their varied

14. (a) By the 20th century, in how many languages of Europe had the Bible been printed, and with what effect? (b) By the end of 1914, in how many languages of Africa was the Bible available?

15. As the last days began, to what extent was the Bible available in the languages of people in the Americas?

tongues. An extensive program of Bible education was under way, with public lectures and intensive distribution of Bible literature published by the International Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then known. Additionally, Bible printing was already being done by Bible societies in 57 other languages to fill the needs of the native-born inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere.

¹⁶ When the time arrived for global preaching of the good news before 'the end would come,' the Bible was no newcomer to

16, 17. (a) To what extent had the Bible become available when the time arrived for global preaching? (b) How has the Bible truly proved to be an enduring and very influential book?

Asia and the islands of the Pacific. (Matthew 24:14) It was already being published in 232 languages characteristic of that part of the globe. Some were complete Bibles; many were translations of the Christian Greek Scriptures; others were a single book of the Sacred Scriptures.

¹⁷ Clearly, the Bible was not enduring as a mere museum display. Of all the books in existence, it was the most widely translated and most extensively distributed book. Consistent with that evidence of divine favor, what was recorded in that book was coming to pass. Its teachings and the spirit back of it were also having a lasting effect on the lives of people in many lands. (1 Peter 1:24, 25) But more was to come—much more.

LOYALLY UPHOLDING GOD'S INSPIRED WORD

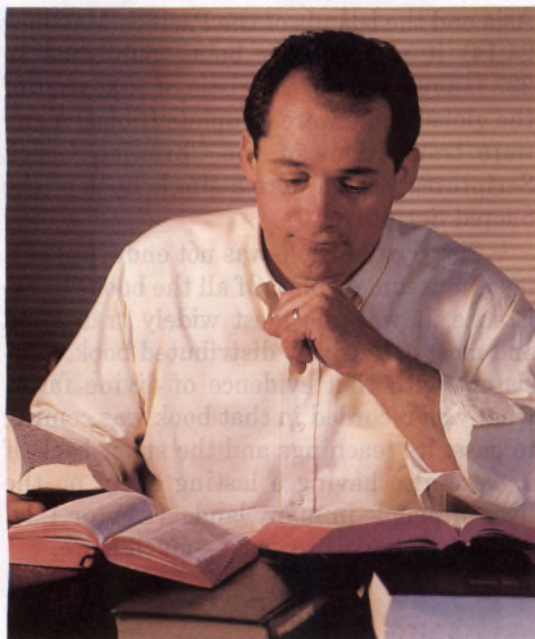
"We have renounced the underhanded things of which to be ashamed, not walking with cunning, neither adulterating the word of God."

—2 CORINTHIANS 4:2.

IN HIS great prophecy regarding the time of his royal presence and the conclusion of the old system of things, Jesus Christ foretold: "This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come." He also instructed his followers: "Make disciples of people of

1. (a) What has been required in order to accomplish the work set out at Matthew 24:14 and 28:19, 20? (b) To what extent was the Bible available in the languages of people when the last days began?

all the nations, . . . teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you." (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) The fulfillment of those prophecies involves much work in translating and printing the Bible, in teaching people what it means, and in helping them to apply it in their lives. What a privilege to share in such activity! Already by 1914 the Bible or some portion of it had been published in 570 languages. But since then hundreds more languages and numerous dialects have been added, and in many



Which Bible translation should you use?

languages more than one translation has been made available.*

² It is a challenge for any translator to take material in one language and make it understandable to those reading and hearing another language. Some Bible translators have done their work with a keen awareness that what they were translating was the Word of God. Others have simply been fascinated by the scholastic challenge of the project. They may have viewed the contents of the Bible as merely a valuable cultural heritage. For some, religion is their business, and getting into print a book that

* United Bible Societies in 1997 listed 2,167 languages and dialects in which the Bible, the whole or in part, has been published. This figure includes many dialects of some languages.

2. What varied motives have influenced the work of Bible translators and publishers?

bears their name as translator or publisher is part of making a living. Their motives obviously influence how they go about their work.

³ Noteworthy is this statement made by the New World Bible Translation Committee: "Translating the Holy Scriptures means rendering into another language the thoughts and sayings of Jehovah God . . . That is a very sobering thought. The translators of this work, who fear and love the Divine Author of the Holy Scriptures, feel toward Him a special responsibility to transmit his thoughts and declarations as accurately as possible. They also feel a responsibility toward the searching readers who depend upon a translation of the inspired Word of the Most High God for their everlasting salvation. It was with such a sense of solemn responsibility that over the course of many years this committee of dedicated men have produced the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*." The goal of the committee was to have a translation of the Bible that would be clear and understandable and that would hold so closely to the original Hebrew and Greek that it would provide a foundation for continued growth in accurate knowledge.

What Has Happened to the Name of God?

⁴ One of the principal objectives of the Bible is to help people come to know the true God. (Exodus 20:2-7; 34:1-7; Isaiah 52:6) Jesus Christ taught his followers to pray that his Father's name "be sanctified," be held sacred, or treated as holy. (Matthew 6:9) God had his personal name included in the Bible more than 7,000 times. He wants peo-

3. How did the New World Bible Translation Committee view its work?

4. How important is the name of God in the Bible?

ple to know that name and the qualities of the One who bears it.—Malachi 1:11.

⁵ Many Bible translators have shown sincere respect for the divine name and have used it consistently in their work. Some translators favor Yahweh. Others have chosen a form of the divine name that is adapted to their own language while still clearly identified with what appears in the Hebrew text, possibly a form that is well-known through long use. The *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* uses Jehovah 7,210 times in its main text.

⁶ In recent years, although Bible translators retain the names of such pagan deities as Baal and Molech, with increasing frequency they are removing the personal name of the true God from translations of his inspired Word. (Exodus 3:15; Jeremiah 32:35) In such passages as Matthew 6:9 and John 17:6, 26, a widely distributed Albanian version renders the Greek expression for “the name of you” (that is, the name of God) as simply “you,” as if those texts made no mention of a name. At Psalm 83:18, *The New English Bible* and *Today’s English Version* eliminate both God’s personal name and any reference to the fact that God has a name. Although the divine name appeared in older translations of the Hebrew Scriptures in most languages, newer translations often eliminate it or relegate it to a marginal notation. This is the case in English, as well as in many languages of Europe, Africa, South America, India, and the islands of the Pacific.

⁷ Translators of the Bible into some Af-

5. How have various translators presented the divine name?

6. (a) In recent years, what have translators done with references to the divine name? (b) How widespread is this practice?

7. (a) How are the translators of some African Bibles dealing with the divine name? (b) How do you feel about that?

rican languages are going a step further. Instead of just replacing the divine name with a Scriptural title, such as God or Lord, they are inserting names taken from local religious beliefs. In *The New Testament and Psalms in Zulu* (1986 version), the title God (*uNkulunkulu*) was used interchangeably with a personal name (*uMvelinqangi*) that Zulus understand to refer to ‘the great ancestor who is worshiped through human ancestors.’ An article in the magazine *The Bible Translator*, of October 1992, reported that in preparing the Chichewa Bible that is to be called *Buku Loyera*, translators were using *Chauta* as a personal name to take the place of Jehovah. *Chauta*, the article explained, is “the God they’ve always known and worshipped.” Yet, many of these people also worship what they believe to be spirits of the dead. Is it true that if people make petitions to a “Supreme Being,” then whatever name they use for the “Supreme Being” is a valid equivalent for the personal name Jehovah, regardless of what else their worship may involve? Definitely not! (Isaiah 42:8; 1 Corinthians 10:20) Replacing God’s personal name with something that makes people feel that their traditional beliefs are actually right does not help them to draw closer to the true God.

In Our Next Issue

Real Happiness—What Is the Key?

The Blessings of the Pioneer Ministry

Good News of Paradise in Tahiti



⁸ All of this has neither changed nor frustrated Jehovah's purpose to have his name made known. In the languages of Europe, Africa, the Americas, the Orient, and the islands of the sea, there are still in circulation many Bibles that include the divine name. There are also upwards of 5,400,000 of Jehovah's Witnesses in 233 countries and territories who collectively devote more than a billion hours a year to telling others about the name and purpose of the true God. They print and distribute Bibles—ones using the divine name—in languages spoken by some 3,600,000,000 of the earth's population, including English, Chinese, Russian, Spanish, Portuguese, French, and Dutch. They also print aids to Bible study in languages that are known by the vast majority of earth's

8. Why has God's purpose to have his name made known not been frustrated?

population. Soon God himself will take action in a way that will decisively fulfill his declaration that the nations "will have to know that [he is] Jehovah."—Ezekiel 38:23.

When Personal Beliefs Shape the Translation

⁹ A serious responsibility rests on those who translate God's Word as well as on those who teach it. The apostle Paul said regarding his ministry and that of his associates: "We have renounced the underhanded things of which to be ashamed, not walking with cunning, neither adulterating the word of God, but by making the truth manifest recommending ourselves to every human conscience in the sight of God." (2 Corinthians 4:2) To adulterate means to

9. How does the Bible indicate the serious responsibility that rests on those who handle God's Word?

corrupt by mixing in something foreign or inferior. The apostle Paul was not like the unfaithful shepherds of Israel in the days of Jeremiah who were reproved by Jehovah because they preached their own ideas instead of what God said. (Jeremiah 23:16, 22) But what has taken place in modern times?

¹⁰ During World War II, a committee of theologians and pastors cooperated with the Nazi government in Germany to produce a revised "New Testament" that eliminated all favorable references to the Jews and all indications of the Jewish ancestry of Jesus Christ. More recently, translators who produced *The New Testament and Psalms: An Inclusive Version* leaned in a different direction, endeavoring to purge all indications that the Jews bore responsibility in connection with the death of Christ. Those translators also felt that feminist readers would be happier if God was spoken of, not as the Father, but as Father-Mother and if Jesus was said to be, not God's Son, but his Child. (Matthew 11:27) While they were at it, they removed the principle of subjection of wives to husbands and obedience of children to parents. (Colossians 3:18, 20) Producers of those translations clearly did not share the apostle Paul's determination not to 'adulterate the word of God.' They were losing sight of the role of translator, taking the position of author, producing books that used the reputation of the Bible as a means to advocate their own opinions.

¹¹ The churches of Christendom generally teach that the human soul is spirit, that it leaves the body at death, and that it is im-

10. (a) How have motives other than loyalty to God influenced some translators in modern times? (b) What role were they improperly assuming?

11. How do the teachings of Christendom conflict with what the Bible says about the soul and death?

mortal. In contrast, older Bible translations in most languages clearly state that humans are souls, that animals are souls, and that the soul dies. (Genesis 12:5; 36:6; Numbers 31:28; James 5:20) That has embarrassed the clergy.

¹² Now some newer versions obscure these truths. How? They simply avoid a direct translation of the Hebrew noun *ne'phesh* (soul) in certain texts. At Genesis 2:7, they may say that the first man "began to live" (instead of "came to be a living soul"). Or they may refer to "creature" instead of "soul" in the case of animal life. (Genesis 1:21) In such texts as Ezekiel 18:4, 20, they refer to "the person" or "the individual" (rather than "the soul") as dying. Such renderings are, perhaps, justifiable to the translator. But how much help do they give to the sincere seeker of truth whose thinking has already been conditioned by Christendom's unscriptural teachings?*

¹³ In an effort to support their belief that all good people go to heaven, translators—or theologians who review their work—may also endeavor to conceal what the Bible says about God's purpose for the earth. At Psalm 37:11, a number of versions read that the humble will possess "the land." "Land" is a possible rendering of

* This discussion focuses on languages that have the capacity to make the issue clear but in which translators choose not to do so. Available vocabulary severely limits what translators can do in certain languages. Honest religious instructors, then, will explain that even though the translator used a variety of terms or even if he used a term having unscriptural overtones, the original-language term, *ne'phesh*, is applied to both humans and animals and represents something that breathes, eats, and can die.

12. In what way do some recent versions obscure basic Bible truths?

13. By what means have some Bible versions concealed God's purpose regarding the earth?

the word (*'e'rets*) used in the Hebrew text. However, *Today's English Version* (which has provided the basis for translations into many other languages) goes further. Although this version renders the Greek word *ge* as "earth" 17 times in the Gospel of Matthew, at Matthew 5:5 it replaces "earth" with the phrase "what God has promised." Church members naturally think of heaven. They are not honestly being informed that, in his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ said that the mild-tempered, meek, or humble ones will "inherit the earth."

¹⁴ Some translations of the Scriptures are obviously worded with a view to helping preachers to get a good salary. It is true that the Bible states: "The workman is worthy of his wages." (1 Timothy 5:18) But at 1 Timothy 5:17, where it says that older men who preside in a fine way are to be "reckoned worthy of double honor," the only honor that some of them view as worth mentioning is monetary. (Compare 1 Peter 5:2.) Thus, *The New English Bible* says that these elders

14. What selfish motivation is evident in certain Bible versions?

Do You Remember?

- ☐ What motives have shaped the work of Bible translators in modern times?
- ☐ Why have modern translation trends not frustrated God's purpose regarding his own name?
- ☐ How do some translations obscure Bible truths about the soul, death, and the earth?
- ☐ In what ways can we show that we loyally uphold God's Word?

"should be reckoned worthy of a double stipend," and the *Contemporary English Version* says that they "deserve to be paid twice as much."

Loyally Upholding God's Word

¹⁵ What does all of this mean for the individual Bible reader and for those who use the Bible to teach others? In most of the widely used languages, there is more than one Bible translation from which to choose. Show discernment in the selection of the Bible you use. (Proverbs 19:8) If a translation is not honest about the identity of God himself—removing his name from his inspired Word on whatever pretext—might the translators also have tampered with other parts of the Bible text? When in doubt about the validity of a rendering, endeavor to compare it with older translations. If you are a teacher of God's Word, favor the versions that hold closely to what is in the original Hebrew and Greek text.

¹⁶ All of us should individually be loyal to God's Word. We do that by caring enough about what it contains so that, if possible, we spend some time every day reading the Bible. (Psalm 1:1-3) We do it by applying fully in our own lives what it says, learning to use its principles and examples as the basis for making sound decisions. (Romans 12:2; Hebrews 5:14) We show that we are loyal advocates of God's Word by zealously preaching it to others. We also do it as teachers by using the Bible carefully, never twisting it or stretching what it says to fit our ideas. (2 Timothy 2:15) What God has foretold will unfailingly take place. He is loyal in fulfilling his Word. May we be loyal in upholding it.

15. How can we determine which Bible translations to quote?

16. How can we individually demonstrate loyalty in our use of God's inspired Word?

GRATEFUL FOR A LONG LIFE IN JEHOVAH'S SERVICE

AS TOLD BY OTTILIE MYDLAND

Late in the 19th century, sailing ships lay side by side in the harbor of Kopervik in western Norway. In those days men and horses pulled carts through the streets. People used paraffin lamps for light, and white-painted wooden houses were heated with wood and coke.

I was born there in June 1898, the second of five children.

IN 1905, Father was unemployed, so he went to the United States. He returned three years later with a suitcase filled with exciting presents for the children and silk fabrics and other items for Mother. But his most precious possessions were volumes by Charles Taze Russell entitled *Studies in the Scriptures*.

Father started to tell friends and relatives things he learned from these books. At local chapel meetings, he used the Bible to show that there is no burning hell. (Ecclesiastes 9:5, 10) In 1909, the year after Father returned from the United States, Brother Russell visited Norway and gave talks in Bergen and Kristiania, now Oslo. Father went to Bergen to listen to him.

Most people accused Father of promoting false teachings. I felt sorry for him and helped him deliver Bible tracts to neighbors. In 1912, I delivered a tract on hell to the daughter of a clergyman. She reviled me and Father. I was dismayed that a clergyman's daughter could use such foul language!

Other Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then called, occasionally visited

us in Kopervik, including Theodor Simonsen, a capable speaker. I would invite people to talks he gave in our home. Before his talk he played the zither and sang, and after his talk he sang a good-night song. We had deep respect for him.

Another visitor to our home was Anna Andersen, a colporteur, or full-time minister. She traveled from town to town all over Norway, mainly by bicycle, placing Bible literature with people. She had once been an officer in the Salvation Army and knew some Salvation Army officers in Kopervik. They permitted her to give a Bible talk in their meeting house, and I invited people to come and listen to her.

Another colporteur who visited us in Kopervik was Karl Gunberg. This modest, quiet, but humorous, man also served periodically as a translator at the branch office in Oslo. Years later we worked together there.

Influenced by Religious Views

At that time most people had not only strong faith in God and the Bible but also

entrenched beliefs, such as in hellfire and the Trinity. Therefore it caused quite a stir when the Bible Students taught that these doctrines were not in harmony with the Bible. I was influenced by our neighbors' strong accusations that Father was a heretic. Once I even said to him: "What you teach is not true. It is heresy!"

"Come here, Otilie," he encouraged me, "and see what the Bible says." Then he read to me from the Scriptures. As a result, my confidence in him and what he taught grew. He encouraged me to read the *Studies in the Scriptures*, so during the summer of 1914, I often sat reading on a knoll overlooking the town.

In August 1914 people crowded outside the local newspaper building reading about the outbreak of World War I. Father came up and saw what was happening. "Thank God!" he exclaimed. He recognized in the outbreak of war the fulfillment of Bible prophecies about which he had been preaching. (Matthew 24:7) Many Bible Students then believed that they would soon be taken to heaven. When this did not occur, some became disappointed.

My Stand for Bible Truth

In 1915, at the age of 17, I finished middle school and began working secularly in an office. I then began reading *The Watch Tower* regularly. But it was not until 1918 that regular meetings were held in Kopervik. To begin with, there were five of us who attended. We read Watch Tower Society publications, such as *Studies in the Scriptures*, and discussed the material by means of questions and answers. Although Mother spoke highly of the Bible Students to others, she never became one of us.

In the office where I worked, beginning in 1918, I became acquainted with Anton Saltnes, whom I was able to help become a Bible Student. At this time I became a reg-

ular publisher and was baptized at an assembly in Bergen in 1921.

In May 1925 there was an assembly for all Scandinavia in Örebro, Sweden. Over 500 were in attendance, including Joseph F. Rutherford, the Watch Tower Society's president. About 30 of us traveled from Oslo by train in a reserved railroad car.

It was announced at this assembly that a Northern European Office would be established in Copenhagen, Denmark, to care for the preaching work throughout Scandinavia and the Baltic countries. William Dey from Scotland was assigned to supervise the preaching work. He was well liked, and he soon became known as the Big Scotsman. In the beginning Brother Dey had no knowledge of any Scandinavian language, so he would sit at the rear during meetings and assemblies and take care of the children so that their parents could concentrate on what was being said from the platform.

The Watch Tower of March 1, 1925, discussed Revelation chapter 12 and explained that this chapter relates to the birth of God's Kingdom and that this birth occurred in heaven in 1914. I found it difficult to understand, so I read the article over and over again. When I finally understood it, I felt very happy.

When adjustments have been made in our understanding of Bible subjects, some have stumbled and have withdrawn from God's people. But when such an adjustment has been hard to grasp, I have always read the material over and over again to try to understand the reasoning. If I still have not understood the new explanation, I wait for clarification. Time and again I have been rewarded by such patience.

Service at Bethel

For some years I worked as a bookkeeper, secretary, and county auditor. In 1928 the



person who had taken care of the Society's financial accounts became sick and had to leave Bethel. Since I had experience in such work, I was asked to take over. I began Bethel service in June 1928. Once in a while, Brother Dey visited us and audited my accounts. Our Bethel family also took the lead in the public preaching work in Oslo, where we then had only one congregation.

Some of us helped the shipping servant at Bethel, Brother Sakshammer, with packing and dispatching *The Golden Age* (now *Awake!*). Brothers Simonsen and Gunberg were among those who provided a helping hand. We had a good time, often singing songs as we worked.

Confident in Kingdom Hope

In 1935 we came to understand that the "great crowd" was not a secondary heavenly class. We learned that it instead represents a class that survives the great tribulation and has the opportunity of living forever in Paradise on earth. (Revelation 7: 9-14) With this new understanding, some who had partaken of the Memorial emblems realized that theirs was an earthly hope, and they discontinued partaking.

Although I never had doubts as to my heavenly hope, I often thought, 'Why does



God want *me*?' I felt unworthy of such a great privilege. As a small, shy woman, I found it strange to think of myself as a *king* ruling together with Christ in heaven. (2 Timothy 2:11, 12; Revelation 5:10) However, I pondered the apostle Paul's words that "not many powerful" were called, but "God chose the weak things of the world, that he might put the strong things to shame."—1 Corinthians 1:26, 27.

Activity During World War II

On April 9, 1940, Norway was invaded by German troops, and soon the country was occupied. As a result of the war, many became responsive to the Kingdom message. From October 1940 to June 1941, we placed more than 272,000 books and booklets. That means that each of the more than 470 Witnesses then in Norway placed, on an average, well over 570 books and booklets during those nine months!

On July 8, 1941, the Gestapo visited all presiding overseers and told them that if the preaching work did not stop, they would be sent to concentration camps. Five German police officers came to Bethel and confiscated much of the Watch Tower Society's property. The Bethel family was taken away and interrogated, but none of us were imprisoned. Finally, on July 21, 1941, the building of the Society, Inkognitogaten 28 B, was confiscated, and our preaching work was banned. I moved back to Kopervik and obtained secular work to support myself.

At the time, Father was serving as a pioneer. One day the Nazis came and searched Father's house. They took all his literature, including his Bibles and Bible concordances. We received only a meager supply of spiritual food during this period. To remain strong spiritually, we studied old books over and over again, such as the book *Government*, and we continued to preach.

Sadly, in many places the brothers were divided. Some were of the opinion that we ought to preach openly and go from house to house while others felt that we should work more secretly, contacting people in other ways. Thus prominent brothers, who had before cooperated very well and whom we loved so much, were not on speaking terms. The division between them caused me greater pain of heart than has any other situation in my life as a Witness.

Renewed Activity After the War

Following the war, in the summer of 1945, Brother Dey visited Norway and held meetings in Oslo, Skien, and Bergen. He appealed to the brothers to bury the hatchet and asked all who desired to do so to stand up. All rose to their feet! The dispute was permanently settled in December 1945, after a visit by Nathan H. Knorr, then president of the Watch Tower Society.

Meanwhile, on July 17, 1945, I received a telegram from the branch servant, Brother Enok Öman, saying: 'When can you return to Bethel?' Some said that I should stay at home and take care of my father, who was then over 70. But Father encouraged me to resume Bethel service, which I did. In 1946, Marvin F. Anderson, a brother from the United States, became our branch overseer, and the preaching work was reorganized.

During summer vacations I would return to Kopervik to see my family. My two brothers and two sisters did not become Witnesses, but they were always friendly to Father and me. One of my brothers became harbor-master and pilot master, and the other was a teacher. Although I was of little means materially, Father would say to them: "Ottilie is richer than you are." And it was true! What they had acquired could not compare to the spiritual riches I was enjoying! Father died at the age of 78 in 1951. Mother had passed away in 1928.

A highlight of my life was attending the international convention of Jehovah's people in New York City in 1953. That year the world field passed the 500,000 publisher mark, and more than 165,000 attended the convention! Before the 1953 convention, I worked for a week at Brooklyn Bethel, the headquarters of Jehovah's organization on earth.

Doing What I Can

In recent years my eyesight has deteriorated because of cataracts. With strong eyeglasses and a magnifying glass, I can still read large print a little. And Christian sisters visit me and read to me twice a week, for which I am very grateful.

My preaching activity also is limited. During the summer, Christian sisters have occasionally taken me out in my wheelchair to a place where I can do some preaching.

I also regularly mail magazines and brochures to schools in Kopervik, such as the elementary school where I was a pupil nearly 100 years ago. I am glad that it is still possible for me to be a regular publisher.

Fortunately the dining room and the Kingdom Hall are on the same floor as my room at Bethel, which since 1983 has been situated at Ytre Enebakk outside Oslo. So I am able to come to morning worship, the meals, and our meetings by means of a walker. And I am happy that I can still get to conventions and assemblies. I enjoy meeting friends that I have known for many years, as well as new brothers and sisters and many nice children.

Maintaining Faith to the End

It is a blessing to be surrounded by active, pleasant, and spiritual people here at Beth-

el. When I started my Bethel service, the entire family was made up of those who had the heavenly hope. (Philippians 3:14) Now everyone at Bethel except me looks forward to living forever on earth.

True, we expected that Jehovah would have taken action earlier. Yet, I rejoice at seeing the great crowd getting bigger and bigger. What increases I have seen! When I engaged in the ministry for the first time, there were about 5,000 publishers worldwide. Now there are more than 5,400,000! Indeed, I have seen "the little one . . . become a thousand, and the small one a mighty nation." (Isaiah 60:22) We need to keep in expectation of Jehovah, as the prophet Habakkuk wrote: "Even if it should delay, keep in expectation of it; for it will without fail come true."—Habakkuk 2:3.

Is the Spirit of the World **POISONING YOU?**

ON September 12, 1990, an explosion occurred in a Kazakstan factory. Dangerous radioactivity was released into the atmosphere, threatening the health of the 120,000 local inhabitants, many of whom took to the streets in protest against the deadly poison.

But as more information came to light, they discovered that they had been living in a poisonous environment for decades. Over the years, 100,000 tons of radioactive waste had been dumped in an unguarded, open-air site. Although the danger was on their door-

step, nobody had taken it seriously. Why not?

Every day, in the local sports stadium, officials posted a radiation count, which gave the impression that there was no danger whatsoever. The figures were accurate, but they only indicated the *gamma* radiation. *Alpha* radiation, which was not measured, can be just as lethal. Many mothers began to comprehend why their children were so sickly.

Spiritually speaking, we can also be poisoned by invisible contamination. And

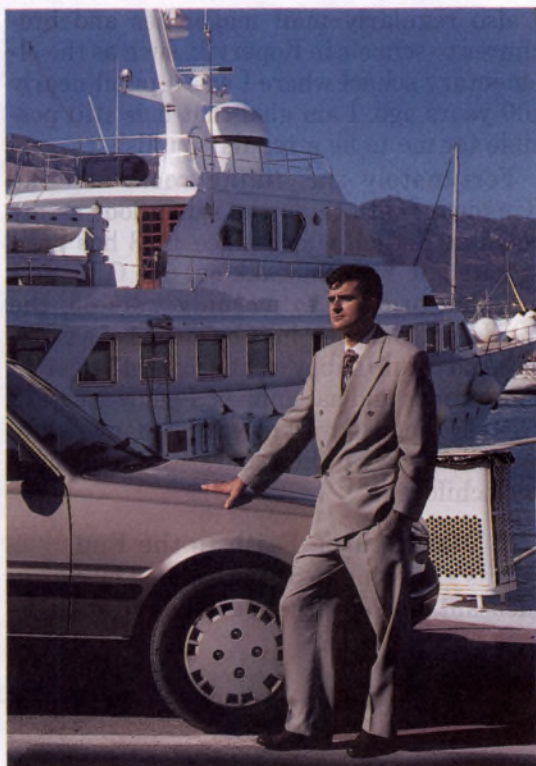
like those unfortunate people in Kazakstan, the majority are unaware of this life-threatening hazard. The Bible identifies this pollution as “the spirit of the world,” which is orchestrated by none other than Satan the Devil. (1 Corinthians 2:12) God’s Adversary maliciously uses this spirit—or prevailing attitude—of the world to undermine our godly devotion.

How can the spirit of the world sap our spiritual strength? By stimulating the desire of the eyes and by playing on our innate selfishness. (Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 John 2:16) By way of example, we will consider three different areas where worldly thinking could gradually poison our spirituality.

Seeking First the Kingdom

Jesus urged Christians to ‘seek first the Kingdom and God’s righteousness.’ (Matthew 6:33) The world’s spirit, on the other hand, could lead us to attach undue importance to our own interests and comforts. The initial danger lies, not in forsaking spiritual interests altogether, but in relegating them to second place. We could overlook the danger—as did the people in Kazakstan—because of a false sense of security. Our years of faithful service and our appreciation for our spiritual brothers and sisters could lull us into thinking that we could never forsake the way of the truth. Possibly, many in the Ephesian congregation felt that way.

About the year 96 C.E., Jesus gave them the following counsel: “I hold this against you, that you have left the love you had at first.” (Revelation 2:4) These long-serving Christians had endured many difficulties. (Revelation 2:2, 3) They had been taught by faithful elders, including the apostle Paul. (Acts 20:17-21, 27) Over the years, however, their love for Jehovah had waned, and they lost their spiritual momentum.—Revelation 2:5.



Striving after a comfortable life-style can divert us from spiritual goals

Likely, some of the Ephesians were affected by the commercialism and prosperity in the city. Sad to say, the materialistic current of today’s society has likewise carried some Christians along with it. A determined striving after a comfortable life-style will inevitably divert us from spiritual goals.—Compare Matthew 6:24.

Warning about this danger, Jesus said: “The lamp of the body is the eye. If, then, your eye is simple, your whole body will be bright; but if your eye is wicked [“envious,” footnote], your whole body will be dark.” (Matthew 6:22, 23) A “simple” eye is an eye that is in focus spiritually, an eye that is fixed on God’s Kingdom. On the oth-

er hand, a “wicked” eye or an “envious” one is shortsighted, able to focus only on immediate fleshly desires. Spiritual objectives and future rewards lie beyond its ken.

Jesus said in the preceding verse: “Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:21) How can we know whether our heart is centered on spiritual or material things? Perhaps the best guide is our conversation, since ‘out of the heart’s abundance the mouth speaks.’ (Luke 6:45) If we find ourselves constantly talking about material things or worldly achievements, it is evidence that our heart is divided and that our spiritual vision is defective.

Carmen, a Spanish sister, wrestled with this problem.* “I was brought up in the truth,” Carmen explains, “but at the age of 18, I started my own kindergarten business. Three years later I had four employees, the business was flourishing, and I was earning a lot of money. Perhaps what satisfied me most, though, was the fact that I had financial independence, and I was ‘successful.’ To be honest, my heart was in my business—it was my greatest love.

“I felt I could still be a Witness while dedicating most of my time to business interests. On the other hand, I also had the nagging feeling that I could do more to serve Jehovah. What finally persuaded me to put Kingdom interests first was the example of two friends who were pioneers. One of them, Juliana, was in my congregation. She didn’t pressure me into pioneering, but her conversations and the joy she clearly derived from her ministry helped me reconsider my own spiritual values.

“Some time later, while on vacation in the United States, I stayed with Gloria, a pioneer sister. She had recently been widowed, and she was looking after her five-year-old daughter and a mother who had cancer. Yet

she pioneered. Her example and her heartfelt appreciation for the ministry touched my heart. The four brief days I spent in her home made me determined to give Jehovah my best. First of all I became a regular pioneer, and a few years later, my husband and I were invited to serve at Bethel. I said goodbye to my business—an obstacle to my spiritual progress—and now I feel my life is successful in Jehovah’s eyes, which is what really matters.”—Luke 14:33.

Learning to “make sure of the more important things,” as Carmen did, will help us make sound decisions regarding our employment, education, housing, and lifestyle. (Philippians 1:10) But do we also make sure of the more important things when it comes to recreation? This is another area where the spirit of the world exerts enormous influence.

Keep Leisure in Its Proper Place

The spirit of the world craftily exploits people’s natural desire for rest and leisure. Since most people have no real hope for the future, it is understandable that they should seek to fill the present with entertainment and relaxation. (Compare Isaiah 22:13; 1 Corinthians 15:32.) Do we find ourselves attaching more and more importance to leisure? That could be a sign that the world’s way of thinking is shaping our viewpoint.

The Bible warns: “He that is loving merriment [“entertainment,” *Lamsa*] will be an individual in want.” (Proverbs 21:17) Having fun is not wrong, but loving it, or assigning it prime importance, will lead to spiritual want. Our spiritual appetite will inevitably be dulled, and we will have less time available for preaching the good news.

For this reason, God’s Word advises us to “be mentally stripped for action, perfectly self-controlled.” (1 Peter 1:13, *The*

* Substitute names have been used.

New English Bible) Self-control is needed to limit our leisure time to what is reasonable. Being stripped for action means being ready for spiritual activity, whether it be study, meetings, or field service.

What about needed rest? Should we feel guilty when we take time off to relax? By no means. Rest is essential, especially in today's stressful world. Nevertheless, as dedicated Christians we cannot allow our lives to center around leisure. Too much leisure can lull us into doing less and less meaningful activity. It can diminish our sense of urgency, and it may even encourage self-indulgence. How, then, can we have a balanced view toward rest?

The Bible recommends taking a handful of rest rather than toiling excessively—especially if the secular work is unnecessary. (Ecclesiastes 4:6) Although rest helps our bodies to regain strength, the source of spiritual energy is God's active force. (Isaiah 40:29-31) We receive this holy spirit in connection with our Christian activities. Personal study feeds our hearts and stimulates right desires. Attending meetings nurtures appreciation for our Creator. Sharing in the Christian ministry fosters feelings for others. (1 Corinthians 9:22, 23) As Paul realistically explained, "the outward man does indeed suffer wear and tear, but every day the inward man receives fresh strength."—2 Corinthians 4:16, *Phillips*.

Ileana, mother of six children and wife of an unbelieving husband, leads a very busy life. She has responsibilities toward her own family and several other relatives, which means that she always seems to be rushing about everywhere. Nevertheless, she also sets a noteworthy example in preaching and meeting preparation. How can she handle so much activity?

"Meetings and field service really help me cope with my other responsibilities," Ileana

explains. "For example, after preaching, I have plenty to think about when I do my housework. Often I sing as I do it. On the other hand, if I have missed a meeting or have done little in field service, household chores become a real effort."

What a contrast to the excessive importance attached to leisure!

Spiritual Beauty Pleases Jehovah

We live in a world that is increasingly obsessed with physical appearance. People spend huge sums on treatments designed to improve their looks and reduce the effects of aging. These include hair transplants and coloring, breast implants, and cosmetic surgery. Millions attend weight-reducing centers, gymnasiums, and aerobic classes, or they buy exercise videos and diet books. The world would have us believe that the passport to happiness is our physical appearance, that our "image" is everything.

In the United States, a survey quoted by *Newsweek* magazine found that 90 percent of white American teenagers were "dissatisfied with their bodies." The desperate quest for the ideal figure can affect our spirituality. Dora was a young Witness of Jehovah who felt ashamed of her physical appearance because she was somewhat overweight. "When I went shopping, it was difficult to find suitable clothes in my size," she explains. "It seemed that smart clothes were made only for slim teenagers. Worse still, people made disparaging comments about my weight, which upset me a lot, especially when they came from my spiritual brothers and sisters.

"As a consequence, I became more and more obsessed with my appearance, to the extent that spiritual values began to take second place in my life. It was as if my happiness depended on my waistline. Several years have gone by, and now that I have ma-

tured as a woman and as a Christian, I see things differently. Although I take care of my appearance, I realize that it is spiritual beauty that matters most, and that is what gives me the greatest satisfaction. Once I understood that, I was able to put Kingdom interests in their rightful place.”

Sarah was a faithful woman of old who had this balanced viewpoint. Although the Bible speaks of her physical beauty when she was over 60 years of age, it draws attention principally to her fine qualities—the secret person of the heart. (Genesis 12:11; 1 Peter 3:4-6) She showed a gentle and mild spirit, and she submissively obeyed her husband. Sarah was not unduly concerned about how others viewed her. Though she came from a wealthy background, she willingly lived in tents for more than 60 years. She meekly and unselfishly supported her husband; she was a woman of faith. That was what made her a truly beautiful woman.—Proverbs 31:30; Hebrews 11:11.

As Christians, we are interested in improving our spiritual beauty, a beauty that, if regularly cultivated, will grow and endure. (Colossians 1:9, 10) We can take care of our spiritual appearance in two main ways.

We become more beautiful in Jehovah’s eyes as we participate in our life-saving ministry. (Isaiah 52:7; 2 Corinthians 3:18-4:2) Furthermore, as we learn to manifest Christian qualities, our beauty deepens. Opportunities for improving our spiritual beauty abound: “Have tender affection for one another. In showing honor to one another take the lead. . . . Be aglow with the spirit. . . . Follow the course of hospitality. . . . Rejoice with people who rejoice; weep with people who weep. . . . Return evil for evil to no one. . . . Be peaceable with all men.” (Romans 12:10-18) Cultivating such attitudes will endear us to both God and fel-

low humans, and it will minimize the ugly appearance of our inherited sinful tendencies.—Galatians 5:22, 23; 2 Peter 1:5-8.

We Can Combat the World’s Spirit!

In so many subtle ways, the poisonous spirit of the world can weaken our integrity. It can make us dissatisfied with what we have and anxious to put our own needs and interests ahead of God’s. Or it may lead us to think men’s thoughts instead of God’s, assigning leisure or physical appearance undue importance.—Compare Matthew 16:21-23.

Satan is determined to destroy our spirituality, and the spirit of the world is one of his main weapons. Remember that the Devil can change his tactics from those of a roaring lion to that of a cautious serpent. (Genesis 3:1; 1 Peter 5:8) Occasionally, the world conquers a Christian by brutal persecution, but more often it poisons him slowly. Paul was more concerned about the latter danger: “I am afraid that somehow, as the serpent seduced Eve by its cunning, your minds might be corrupted away from the sincerity and the chastity that are due the Christ.”—2 Corinthians 11:3.

To protect ourselves from the serpent’s cunning, we need to identify the propaganda that “originates with the world” and then reject it firmly. (1 John 2:16) We must not be deceived into believing that the worldly way of thinking is harmless. The poisonous air of Satan’s system has reached alarming levels.—Ephesians 2:2.

Once worldly thinking is identified, we can combat it by filling our minds and hearts with Jehovah’s pure teaching. Like King David, let us say: “Make me know your own ways, O Jehovah; teach me your own paths. Make me walk in your truth and teach me, for you are my God of salvation.”—Psalm 25:4, 5.

SHUNEM

Marked by Love and Violence

IN SOUTHERN Galilee, at the eastern end of the low plain of Jezreel, lay the city of Shunem. This small city witnessed two of the most significant battles of Bible history, but it was also renowned as the birthplace of two women who exemplified loyal love.

Behind Shunem rose the hill thought to be Moreh, while across the plain, about five miles away, stood Mount Gilboa. Between those two hills, there was a well-watered, fruitful land—one of the most productive regions of all Israel.

This lush countryside around Shunem provides a setting for one of the most enchanting love stories ever told—The Song of Solomon. This song tells about a beautiful country girl who preferred to marry her shepherd companion rather than accept the offer of King Solomon to become one of his wives. Solomon employed all his wisdom and wealth to win her heart. Time and time again, he praised her: "Who is this woman that is looking down like the dawn, beautiful like the full moon, pure like the glowing sun?" And he promised to pamper her with all the jewelry she could imagine.—Song of Solomon 1:11; 6:10.

To give her a taste of the royal life, Solomon had her accompany him to Jerusalem as part of his cortege, accompanied by 60 of his finest soldiers. (Song of Solomon 3:6-11) He housed her in his royal court, a court so impressive that when the queen of Sheba saw it, "there proved to be no more spirit in her."—1 Kings 10:4, 5.

But the girl from Shunem was loyal to the shepherd boy. "Like an apple tree among the trees of the forest," she said, "so is my dear one." (Song of Solomon 2:3) Let Solomon rejoice with his thousand vineyards. One vineyard—along with her loved one—was sufficient for her. Her love could not be shaken.—Song of Solomon 8:11, 12.

Another beautiful woman lived in Shunem. We know nothing of her physical appearance, but she was certainly beautiful of heart. The Bible says that she 'restricted herself'—or went to a lot of trouble—in order to provide the prophet Elisha regular meals and accommodations.—2 Kings 4:8-13.

We can imagine Elisha returning thankfully after a long, fatiguing journey, to the little roof chamber she and her husband had prepared for him. He probably visited their home often, since his ministry spanned 60 years. Why did this Shunammite woman insist that Elisha stay at their home every time he passed that way? Because she valued Elisha's work. This humble, selfless prophet acted as the conscience of the nation, reminding kings, priests, and commoners of their duty to serve Jehovah.

No doubt the Shunammite woman was one of the people Jesus had in mind when he said: "He that receives a prophet because he is a prophet will get a prophet's reward." (Matthew 10:41) Jehovah granted a special reward to this God-fearing woman. Although she had been barren for many years, she gave birth to a son. Years later she was also given divine assistance when a seven-year famine devastated the land. This moving account reminds us that the kindness we show to God's servants never goes unnoticed by our heavenly Father.—2 Kings 4:13-37; 8:1-6; Hebrews 6:10.

Two Decisive Battles

Although Shunem is remembered as the home of these two loyal women, it also witnessed two battles that changed the course of Israelite history. There was an ideal battleground nearby—the plain between the hills of Moreh and Gilboa. Mil-

**Modern village of Sulam at
the site of ancient Shunem,
with Moreh in the background**

itary commanders in Bible times invariably camped where there was a generous water supply, high ground for protection, and, if possible, a dominant position overlooking a dry valley plain with sufficient space to maneuver hordes of men, horses, and chariots. Shunem and Gilboa offered such advantages.

During the time of the judges, an army of 135,000 Midianites, Amalekites, and others were camped in the plain in front of Moreh. Their camels were "as numerous as the grains of sand that are on the seashore." (Judges 7:12) Facing them across the plain, by the well of Harod at the foot of Mount Gilboa, were the Israelites under Judge Gideon, who had only 32,000 soldiers.

During the days before a battle, each side would try to demoralize the other. The hordes of jeering troops, the war camels, the chariots, and the horses could strike fear into the foot soldiers. Doubtless, the Midianites—who were already in place while the Israelites gathered—proved to be a frightening spectacle. When Gideon asked, "Who is there afraid and trembling?" two thirds of his army responded by abandoning the battleground.—Judges 7:1-3.

Only 10,000 Israelite troops now stared across the plain at 135,000 enemy soldiers, and soon Jehovah reduced the number of Israelite soldiers to a meager 300. Following the Israelite custom, this small band was split into three divisions. Under the cover of darkness, they spread out and took up their positions on three sides of the enemy camp. Then at the command of Gideon, the 300 smashed the jars that had concealed their torches, held aloft those torches, and shouted,



Pictorial Archive (Near Eastern History) Est.

"Jehovah's sword and Gideon's!" They blew their horns and kept on blowing. In the darkness, the startled mixed crowd of soldiers imagined that 300 bands were attacking them. Jehovah turned each one against the other, and "the whole camp got on the run and broke out into shouting and went fleeing."—Judges 7:15-22; 8:10.

A second battle took place near Shunem during the time of King Saul. The Bible reports that "the Philistines collected together and came and pitched camp in Shunem. So Saul collected all Israel together and they pitched camp in Gilboa," just as Gideon's army had done years before. But Saul, unlike Gideon, had little trust in Jehovah, preferring to consult a spirit medium at En-dor. When he saw the camp of the Philistines, "he became afraid, and his heart began to tremble very much." In the ensuing battle, the Israelites took to flight and were heavily defeated. Both Saul and Jonathan lost their lives.—1 Samuel 28:4-7; 31:1-6.

So it was that the history of Shunem became marked by both love and violence, trust in Jehovah and reliance on the demons. In this valley plain, two women showed constancy in love and hospitality, and two Israelite leaders fought decisive battles. All four examples illustrate the importance of relying on Jehovah, who never fails to reward those who serve him.

Showing Love to Those in Need



CHRISTIANS have both the obligation and the privilege to show love to their brothers and sisters in need. (1 John 3:17, 18) The apostle Paul wrote: "Let us work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith." (Galatians 6:10) A brother who has been serving Jehovah for almost four decades recently experienced the love of the Christian brotherhood during his wife's illness and subsequent death. He writes:

"Since I cared for my wife at home during her illness, I was not able to work secularly for almost two months. How relieved I was when the friends in the congregation willingly came to our aid!

Dozens of monetary gifts—'to help with the extra expenses,' as the accompanying cards would say—paid for the mortgage, utilities, and other expenses.

"Two weeks before my wife's death, our circuit overseer paid us an encouraging visit. He even showed the slides that the congregation would see at the end of the week. We were able to listen to the meetings over the telephone—including the meetings for field service conducted by the circuit overseer. At one of these, he had all those present for field service say 'hello,' as a group, to my wife. Thus, even though she was isolated physically, she never felt alone.

"Within an hour after her death, almost all the elders were at my house. Over a hundred brothers and sisters stopped by on that day alone. Food 'miraculously' appeared on the table for all present. I can't begin to recount all the gifts, expressions of sympathy, comforting words, and prayers that were offered in my behalf. How strengthening they were! I finally had to ask the brothers to *stop* providing meals and housecleaning assistance!

"Where else but in Jehovah's organization can we find such unselfish expressions of compassion, concern, and love? Most people today can count on one hand the number of real friends they have. Jehovah has blessed us with a large extended family of spiritual brothers and sisters!"—Mark 10:29, 30.