

THE **WATCHTOWER**
ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

MAY 15, 1998

**CAN RICHES
MAKE YOU
HAPPY?**

THE WATCHTOWER[®]

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

May 15, 1998

Average Printing Each Issue: 22,103,000

Vol. 119, No. 10

THE PURPOSE OF *THE WATCHTOWER* is to exalt Jehovah God as Sovereign Lord of the universe. It keeps watch on world events as these fulfill Bible prophecy. It comforts all peoples with the good news that God's Kingdom will soon destroy those who oppress their fellowmen and that it will turn the earth into a paradise. It encourages faith in God's now-reigning King, Jesus Christ, whose shed blood opens the way for mankind to gain eternal life. *The Watchtower*, published by Jehovah's Witnesses continuously since 1879, is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

IN THIS ISSUE

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>3 A King With Wealth and Wisdom</p> <p>4 Can Riches Make You Happy?</p> <p>7 Eunice and Lois—Exemplary Educators</p> <p>10 Christian Faith Will Be Tested</p> <p>16 The Quality of Your Faith—Tested Now</p> <p>21 Reaching Hearts With the Art of Persuasion</p> | <p>24 You Can Make Spiritual Progress</p> <p>28 What Is the Talmud?</p> <p>32 Fine Conduct Brings Praise</p> |
|--|--|

WATCHTOWER STUDIES

JUNE 22-28: Christian Faith Will Be Tested. Page 10. Songs to be used: 125, 56.

JUNE 29-JULY 5: The Quality of Your Faith—Tested Now. Page 16. Songs to be used: 144, 85.

Now published in 128 languages.

SEMI-MONTHLY LANGUAGES AVAILABLE BY MAIL: Afrikaans, Albanian, Amharic, Arabic, Bengali, Bicol, Bislama, Bulgarian, Cebuano, Chichewa, Chinese, Chinese (Simplified), Cibemba, Croatian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, Efik, English, (also Braille), Estonian, Ewe, Fijian, Finnish, French, Ga, Georgian, German, Greek, Gujarati, Gun, Hebrew, Hiligaynon, Hindi, Hiri Motu, Hungarian, Igbo, Iloko, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese (also Braille), Kanak, Kinyarwanda, Korean (also Braille), Latvian, Lingala, Lithuanian, Macedonian, Malagasy, Malayalam, Maltese, Marathi, Myanmar, Nepali, New Guinea Pidgin, Norwegian, Pangasinan, Papiamentu, Polish, Portuguese (also Braille), Rarotongan, Romanian, Russian, Samar-Leyte, Samoan, Sepedi, Serbian, Sesotho, Shona, Sinhalese, Slovak, Slovenian, Solomon Islands Pidgin, Spanish, Sranantongo, Swahili, Swedish, Tagalog, Tahitian, Tamil, Telugu, Thai, Tigrinya, Tongan, Tshiluba, Tsonga, Tswana, Turkish, Twi, Ukrainian, Venda, Vietnamese, Wallisian, Xhosa, Yoruba, Zulu

MONTHLY LANGUAGES AVAILABLE BY MAIL: Armenian, Cambodian, Chitonga, East Armenian, Gilbertese, Greenlandic, Hausa, Icelandic, Isoko, Kiluba, Kirghiz, Kirundi, Kwanyama, Ndonga, Luganda, Luvale, Marshallese, Monokutuba, Moore, Niuean, Ossetian, Otetela, Palauan, Persian, Ponapean, Punjabi, Sango, Silozi, Trukese, Tuvai, Urdu, Yapepe

* Study articles also available in large-print edition.
* Audiocassettes also available.

© 1998 Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. All rights reserved. Milton G. Henschel, President

If you would like to learn about Jehovah's Witnesses or their publications, please write to Watch Tower at the appropriate address below.

America, United States of: Wallkill, NY 12589. **Australia:** Box 280, Ingleburn, N.S.W. 2565. **Bahamas:** Box N-1247, Nassau, N.P. **Barbados:** Fontabelle Rd., Bridgetown. **Britain:** The Ridgeway, London NW7 1RN. **Canada:** Box 4100, Halton Hills (Georgetown), Ontario L7G 4Y4. **Germany:** Niederselters, Am Steinfels, D-65618 Selters. **Ghana:** Box 760, Accra. **Guyana:** 50 Brickdam, Georgetown 16. **Hawaii 96819:** 2055 Kam IV Rd., Honolulu. **Hong Kong:** 4 Kent Road, Kowloon Tong. **India:** Post Bag 10, Lonavla, Pune Dis., Mah. 410 401. **Ireland:** Newcastle, Greystones, Co. Wicklow. **Jamaica:** Box 103, Old Harbour P.O., St. Catherine. **Japan:** 1271 Nakashinden, Ebina City, Kanagawa Pref., 243-0496. **Kenya:** Box 47788, Nairobi. **New Zealand:** P.O. Box 142, Manurewa. **Nigeria:** P.M.B. 1090, Benin City, Edo State. **Philippines, Republic of:** P.O. Box 2044, 1060 Manila. **South Africa:** Private Bag X2067, Krugersdorp, 1740. **Trinidad and Tobago, Republic of:** Lower Rapsley Street & Laxmi Lane, Curepe. **Zambia:** Box 33459, Lusaka 10101. **Zimbabwe:** P. Bag A-6113, Avondale.

The Bible translation used is the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*—With References, unless otherwise indicated.

Would you welcome more information or a free home Bible study? Please send your request to Watch Tower, using the appropriate address above.

Publication of "The Watchtower" is part of a worldwide Bible educational work supported by voluntary donations.

Changes of address should reach us 30 days before your moving date. Give us your old and new address (if possible, your old address label).

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087) is published semi-monthly by Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., 25 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, NY 11201-2483. Periodicals Postage Paid at Brooklyn, NY, and at additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to Watchtower, Wallkill, NY 12589.

Printed in U.S.A.

Do you think that riches would make you happy? If somebody gave you a large sum of money, would you not be pleased? Probably you would. Likely you could think of ways to spend it.

A KING WITH WEALTH AND WISDOM

ADMITTEDLY, there are plenty of things to buy to make life more comfortable and enjoyable. Money can also serve “for a protection” against unexpected problems, such as disease or unemployment.—Ecclesiastes 7:12.

But what is the relationship between money and happiness? Do you think, as many do, that happiness is a by-product of wealth? Finding the answers to these questions may be difficult because money can easily be measured, or counted, while happiness cannot. You cannot put happiness on a scale and weigh it.

Then, too, some rich people seem to be happy, while others are miserable. The same is true of those who are poor. Still, most people—even those who are already wealthy—believe that more money will bring them greater happiness.



Reproduced from *Die Heilige Schrift - Übersetzt von Dr. Joseph Franz von Alloli*. Druck und Verlag von Eduard Hallberger, Stuttgart

One person who wrote about such matters was King Solomon of ancient Israel. He was one of the richest men who ever lived. You can read a description of his enormous wealth in the 10th chapter of the Bible book of First Kings. Notice, for example, that verse 14 states: “The weight of the gold that came to Solomon *in one year* amounted up to six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold.” That figure is equivalent to 25 tons of gold. Today, that much gold would be worth well over \$200,000,000, U.S.!

Yet, Solomon was not merely rich; he was blessed by God with wisdom. The Bible relates: “King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. And all the people of the earth were seeking the face of Solomon to hear his wisdom that God had put in his heart.” (1 Kings 10: 23, 24) We too can benefit from Solomon’s wisdom, since his writings make up part of the Bible record. Let us see what he had to say about the relationship between wealth and happiness.

King Solomon knew the value of money. He wrote: "Bread is for the laughter of the workers, and wine itself makes life rejoice; but money is what meets a response in all things." (Ecclesiastes 10:19) Dining with friends can be most enjoyable, but to obtain bread or wine, you need money. Since money is the means by which material things are obtained, it "meets a response in all things."

CAN RICHES MAKE YOU HAPPY?

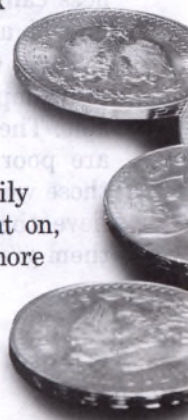
THOUGH Solomon was fabulously wealthy, he knew that riches have their limitations. He recognized that a materialistic way of life does not unlock the door to happiness. He wrote: "A mere lover of silver will not be satisfied with silver, neither any lover of wealth with income." —Ecclesiastes 5:10.

Suppose a wealthy person obtains even greater wealth. Solomon says: "When good things become many, those eating them certainly become many." (Ecclesiastes 5:11) As a person's "good things," or possessions, increase, more people are needed to care for them. Repairmen, caretakers, servants, se-

curity people, and others—all must be paid for their services. In turn, this requires ever more money.

Such a situation has a direct bearing on a person's happiness. The Greek historian Xenophon, who lived in the fourth century B.C.E., wrote down the comments of a poor man who had become rich:

"Why, do you actually suppose . . . that the more I own, the more happily I live? You are not aware," he went on, "that it gives me not one whit more





**King Solomon knew what makes
a person happy. Do you?**

pleasure to eat and drink and sleep now than it did when I was poor. My only gain from having so much is that I am obliged to take care of more, distribute more to others, and have the trouble of looking after more than I used to have. For now many domestics look to me for food, many for drink, and many for clothes, while some need doctors; and one comes to me with a tale about sheep attacked by wolves, or of oxen killed by falling over a precipice, or to say that some disease has broken out among the cattle. And so it looks to me . . . as if I had

more trouble now through possessing much than I used to have from possessing little.”

Another reason why people pursue ever more wealth is that they are beguiled by what Jesus Christ called “the deceptive power of riches.” (Matthew 13:22) They are deceived because in these riches that they so ardently seek, they never find the satisfaction or happiness they expected to find. They reason that what limited wealth fails to do, greater wealth will do. So there is a constant striving for more.

**Love of Money
Does Not Lead to Happiness**

Concern about his possessions may prevent a rich man from enjoying a peaceful night’s rest. Solomon writes: “Sweet is the sleep of the one serving, regardless of whether it is little or much that he eats; but the plenty belonging to the rich one is not permitting him to sleep.”—Ecclesiastes 5:12.

When worry about the possible loss of one’s wealth is taken to an extreme, more is involved than lack of sleep. Describing the miser, Solomon writes: “All his days he eats in darkness itself, with a great deal of vexation, with sickness on his part and cause for indignation.” (Ecclesiastes 5:17) Instead of finding happiness in his wealth, he eats ‘with vexation,’ as though he begrudges even the money he has to spend for food. Such a sick mental outlook may contribute to poor health. In turn, poor health adds to the anxiety of the miser, since it hinders him from amassing greater wealth.

Perhaps this reminds you of what the apostle Paul wrote: “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 stabbed themselves all over with many pains.” (1 Timothy

6:9, 10) In the pursuit of money, people cheat, lie, steal, prostitute themselves, and even commit murder. The result is a person stabbed with emotional, physical, and spiritual pains because of trying to grasp and hold on to riches. Does this sound like the road to happiness? Hardly!

Being Content With What We Have

Solomon had more to say about a balanced view of riches. He wrote: "Just as one has come forth from his mother's belly, naked will one go away again, just as one came; and nothing at all can one carry away for his hard work, which he can take along with his hand. Look! The best thing that I myself have seen, which is pretty, is that one should eat and drink and see good for all his hard work with which he works hard under the sun for the number of the days of his life that the true God has given him, for that is his portion."—Ecclesiastes 5:15, 18.

These words show that happiness does not lie in striving to stockpile wealth for a time that may never come for us. Far better it is to be satisfied and to rejoice in the results of our hard work. The apostle Paul expressed a similar thought in his inspired letter to Timothy, saying: "We have brought nothing into the world, and neither can we carry anything out. So, having sustenance and cover-

ing, we shall be content with these things."—1 Timothy 6:7, 8; compare Luke 12:16-21.

The Key to Happiness

Solomon possessed an abundance of both riches and godly wisdom. But he linked happiness with wisdom, not with money. He said: "Happy is the man that has found wisdom, and the man that gets discernment, for having it as gain is better than having silver as gain and having it as produce than gold itself. It is more precious than corals, and all other delights of yours cannot be made equal to it. Length of days is in its right hand; in its left hand there are riches and glory. Its ways are ways of pleasantness, and all its roadways are peace. It is a tree of life to those taking hold of it, and those keeping fast hold of it are to be called happy."—Proverbs 3:13-18.

Why is wisdom superior to material possessions? Solomon wrote: "Wisdom is for a protection the same as money is for a protection; but the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom itself preserves alive its owners." (Ecclesiastes 7:12) While money provides a measure of protection, enabling its owner to buy what he needs, wisdom can safeguard a person from taking risks that may jeopardize his life. Not only may true wisdom save a person from a premature death but, since it is based on a proper fear of God, it will lead to the gaining of everlasting life.

Why does godly wisdom lead to happiness? Because true happiness can come only from Jehovah God. Experience proves that genuine happiness can be gained only through obedience to the Most High. Enduring happiness depends on an approved standing with God. (Matthew 5:3-10) By applying what we learn from a study of the Bible, we will cultivate "the wisdom from above." (James 3:17) It will give us happiness that riches can never bring.

In Our Next Issue

Wait Patiently

**'Go On Walking in
Union With Christ'**

**Shouldering Responsibility
for Family Care**

EUNICE AND LOIS

Exemplary Educators



As Jehovah's servants, we know that providing an effective religious education for our children is a serious responsibility. Even in the best of times, this task may be fraught with all kinds of obstacles and difficulties.

This is all the more so when a Christian parent is facing that challenge in a religiously divided household.

Such a situation is not new. The Scriptures tell us about one parent who found herself in a similar position in the first century C.E.

The family of a woman named Eunice lived in Lystra, a city in the region of Lycaonia in south-central Asia Minor. Lystra was a small provincial city of no great importance. It was a Roman colony called Julia Felix Gemina Lustra, founded by Augustus Caesar to counteract the activities of brigands in surrounding areas. Eunice was a Jewish Christian who lived in a religiously divided household with her Greek husband, her son Timothy, and her mother Lois.—Acts 16:1-3.

Likely, there were few Jews in Lystra, since the Bible makes no mention of a synagogue there, though there was a Jewish presence in Iconium, some 20 miles away. (Acts 14:19) So it must not have been easy for Eunice to practice her faith. The fact that Timothy was not circumcised after he was born has led some scholars to surmise that Eunice's husband had opposed that idea.

Eunice was not alone in her beliefs, however. It appears that Timothy received his instruction in "the holy writings" both from his mother and from his maternal grandmother, Lois.* The apostle Paul exhorted Timothy: "Continue in the things that you learned and were persuaded to believe, knowing from what persons you learned them and that from infancy you have known the holy writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through the faith in connection with Christ Jesus."—2 Timothy 3:14, 15.

Education "From Infancy"

When Paul said that Timothy's education in "the holy writings" had been imparted "from infancy," this evidently meant from

* That Lois was not Timothy's paternal grandmother is indicated by the Syriac rendering "thy mother's mother" at 2 Timothy 1:5.

babyhood. This is in keeping with his use of a Greek word (*bre'phos*) that generally refers to a newborn. (Compare Luke 2:12, 16.) Eunice thus took her God-given obligation seriously, wasting no time in beginning to give Timothy training that would help him grow into a devoted servant of God.—Deuteronomy 6:6-9; Proverbs 1:8.

Timothy had been "persuaded to believe" Scriptural truths. According to one Greek lexicon, the word Paul used here means "to be firmly persuaded of; to be assured of" something. No doubt, considerable time and effort were needed to root such firm conviction in Timothy's heart, helping him to reason on God's Word and exercise faith in it. Apparently, then, both Eunice and Lois worked hard to teach Timothy from the Scriptures. And what a reward those godly women reaped! Paul could write of Timothy: "I recollect the faith which is in you without any hypocrisy, and which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, but which I am confident is also in you."—2 Timothy 1:5.

What a vital role Eunice and Lois played in Timothy's life! In this regard, writer David Read states: "If the apostle believed that nothing mattered but Timothy's own personal experience of conversion, he would have reminded him of it right away. But the first thing he has to say about Timothy's faith was that it was already 'alive in Lois . . . and Eunice.'" Paul's statement regarding the faith of Lois, Eunice, and Timothy shows that often the early Scriptural education given at home by parents and even grandparents is fundamental in determining a young one's future spiritual prospects. Should that not make family members think seriously about what they are doing to fulfill this responsibility toward both God and their children?

Perhaps Paul was also thinking about the kind of home environment Lois and Eunice had created. The apostle may have visited their home during his first stay in Lystra, about 47/48 C.E. The two women probably converted to Christianity at that time. (Acts 14:8-20) Perhaps warm, happy relations enjoyed in that household influenced Paul's choice of words when referring to Lois as Timothy's "grandmother." According to scholar Ceslas Spicq, the Greek term he used (*mam'me*, in contrast with the classical and respectful *te'the*) is "a child's word of endearment" for his grandmother, which in this context conveys a "nuance of familiarity and affection."

Timothy's Departure

Just what Eunice's marital status was when Paul visited Lystra a second time (about 50 C.E.) is not clear. Many scholars assume that she was a widow. In any case, under the guidance of his mother and grandmother, Timothy had grown into a fine young man, perhaps about 20 years old by that time. He was "well reported on by the brothers in Lystra and Iconium." (Acts 16:2) Evidently, a desire to spread the good news of the Kingdom had been implanted in Timothy's heart, for he accepted Paul's invitation to travel with him and Silas on their missionary journey.

Imagine how Eunice and Lois felt when Timothy was about to leave! They knew that on Paul's first visit to their city, the apostle had been stoned and left for dead. (Acts 14:19) So it must not have been easy for them to let young Timothy go. Likely, they wondered how long he would be away and whether he would return safely. Despite such probable anxieties, his mother and grandmother undoubtedly encouraged him to accept this special privilege

that would enable him to serve Jehovah more fully.

Valuable Lessons

Much can be learned from careful consideration of Eunice and Lois. Faith motivated them to give Timothy a spiritually sound upbringing. The mature, stable example of godly devotion that grandparents set for their grandchildren and others can certainly be beneficial to the entire Christian congregation. (Titus 2:3-5) Eunice's example likewise reminds mothers with unbelieving husbands of the responsibility and rewards of imparting spiritual instruction to their children. Doing this may require great courage at times, especially if the father is not well-disposed toward the religious beliefs of his spouse. It also calls for tact, since the Christian wife must respect her husband's headship.

The faith, effort, and self-denial of Lois and Eunice were rewarded by their seeing Timothy make spiritual progress to the point of becoming an excellent missionary and overseer. (Philippians 2:19-22) Likewise today, teaching Scriptural truths to our children demands time, patience, and determination, but a fine outcome makes all the effort truly worthwhile. Many exemplary Christian youths who have been taught 'the holy writings from infancy' in a religiously divided household bring great joy to their godly parent. And how true the proverb that says: 'She who gives birth to a wise one will be joyful'!—Proverbs 23:23-25.

The apostle John said of his spiritual children: "No greater cause for thankfulness do I have than these things, that I should be hearing that my children go on walking in the truth." (3 John 4) Surely, the sentiment expressed in those words is shared by many who have proved to be like Eunice and Lois, two exemplary educators.

CHRISTIAN FAITH WILL BE TESTED

"Faith is not a possession of all people."—2 THESSALONIANS 3:2.

DOWN through history, there have been men, women, and children with true faith. The qualifier "true" is fitting because millions of others have displayed a sort of faith that has been like credulity, a readiness to believe without valid basis or reason. Such faith has often involved false gods or forms of worship that are out of harmony with the Almighty, Jehovah, and his revealed Word. The apostle Paul thus wrote: "Faith is not a possession of all people."—2 Thessalonians 3:2.

² But Paul's statement implies that back then some did have true faith and, by implication, some today do. Most readers of this journal desire to have and to increase in such true faith—faith in harmony with accurate knowledge of divine truth. (John 18:37; Hebrews 11:6) Is that so with you? Then it is imperative that you recognize and be prepared for the fact that your faith will be tested. Why can that be said?

³ We must admit that Jesus Christ is central to our faith. Indeed, the Bible speaks of him as the Perfecter of our faith. That is because of what Jesus said and did, particularly how he fulfilled prophecy. He strengthened the basis on which humans can establish true faith. (Hebrews 12:2; Rev-

elation 1:1, 2) Still, we read that Jesus was "tested in all respects like ourselves, but without sin." (Hebrews 4:15) Yes, Jesus' faith was tested. Far from discouraging us or creating apprehension, that should comfort us.

⁴ By going through great trials even to the point of death on the stake, Jesus "learned obedience." (Hebrews 5:8) He proved that humans can live by true faith despite any tests that might come upon them. This takes on particular significance when we think of what Jesus said about his followers: "Bear in mind the word I said to you, A slave is not greater than his master." (John 15:20) In fact, regarding his followers in our time, Jesus predicted: "You will be objects of hatred by all the nations on account of my name."—Matthew 24:9.

⁵ Early in this century, judgment began with the house of God. The Scriptures foretold: "It is the appointed time for the judgment to start with the house of God. Now if it starts first with us, what will the end be of those who are not obedient to the good news of God? 'And if the righteous man is being saved with difficulty, where will the ungodly man and the sinner make a showing?'"—1 Peter 4:17, 18.

Faith Tested—Why?

⁶ In a sense, faith that is untested has no

1. How has history shown that not all have true faith?
2. Why is it vital that we examine our own faith?
- 3, 4. Why should we look to Jesus in regard to tests of faith?

5. How do the Scriptures indicate that we will face tests?
6. Why is tested faith invaluable?

proven worth, and its quality remains unknown. You might liken it to a check that has not yet been cashed. You may have received a check for work that you did, for goods that you provided, or even as a gift. The check may look good, but is it? Is it really worth the amount that appears on it? Similarly, our faith must be more than just an appearance or a mere profession. It must be tested if we are to prove that it has substance and real quality. When our faith is tested, we may find that it is strong and valuable. A test may also reveal any areas in which our faith needs refinement or bolstering.

⁷ God permits persecution and other tests of faith to come upon us. We read: "When under trial, let no one say: 'I am being tried by God.' For with evil things God cannot be tried nor does he himself try anyone." (James 1:13) Who or what is responsible for such trials? It is Satan, the world, and our own imperfect flesh.

⁸ We may admit that Satan exerts a powerful influence over the world, over its thinking and its ways. (1 John 5:19) And we probably know that he instigates persecution against Christians. (Revelation 12:17) But are we equally convinced that Satan tries to mislead us by appealing to our imperfect flesh, dangling worldly enticements before our eyes, hoping that we will take the bait, disobey God, and end up disapproved by Jehovah? Of course, Satan's methods should not surprise us, for he used the same tactics when trying to tempt Jesus.—Matthew 4:1-11.

⁹ Through his Word and the Christian congregation, Jehovah sets before our eyes positive examples of faith that we can imitate. Paul admonished: "Unitedly become imita-

tors of me, brothers, and keep your eye on those who are walking in a way that accords with the example you have in us." (Philippians 3:17) As one of God's anointed servants in the first century, Paul took the lead in performing works of faith despite the great trials he experienced. Down at the end of the 20th century, we are not lacking in comparable examples of faith. The words of Hebrews 13:7 apply now with as much force as when Paul wrote them: "Remember those who are taking the lead among you, who have spoken the word of God to you, and as you contemplate how their conduct turns out imitate their faith."

¹⁰ That admonition has particular force when we consider how the conduct of the anointed remnant has turned out. We can contemplate their example and imitate their faith. Their's is a true faith that has been refined by trials. With small beginnings back in the 1870's, a worldwide Christian brotherhood developed. As fruitage of the faith and endurance of the anointed ones from then on, over five and a half million Witnesses of Jehovah are now preaching and teaching about the Kingdom of God. The present global congregation of zealous true worshipers is a testament to tested faith.—Titus 2:14.

Faith Tested Concerning 1914

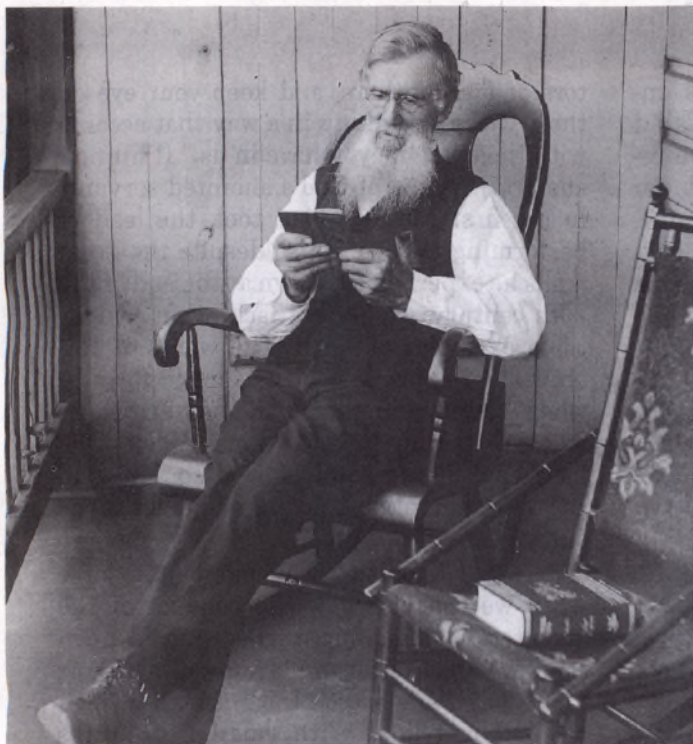
¹¹ Years before the outbreak of the first world war, the anointed remnant had been proclaiming that 1914 would be a significant date in Bible prophecy. However, some of their expectations were premature, and their view of what would happen was less than perfect. For example, C. T. Russell, first president of the Watch Tower Society, and his associates could see that a

7. 8. From what source do tests of our faith come?

9. How can we benefit from examples of faith?

10. What particular examples of faith do we have in recent times?

11. How was 1914 significant for C. T. Russell and his associates?



Around the turn of the century, people in many lands were studying the Bible with the help of the "Millennial Dawn" series, later called "Studies in the Scriptures"

a convention of the Bible Students, as Jehovah's Witnesses were then called. Soon Macmillan was baptized and began working with Brother Russell at the Society's headquarters in New York.

¹³ Based on their reading of the Bible, those anointed Christians pointed to 1914 as a turning point in God's purpose. But Macmillan and others wondered how the preaching to the nations foretold at Matthew 24:14 could be accomplished in the short remaining time. He later said: "I remember discussing that with Brother Russell frequently, and he

would say, 'Well, brother, right in New York we have more Jews than there are in Jerusalem. We have more Irishmen here than there are in Dublin. And we have more Italians than there are in Rome. Now if we reach them here, that will be reaching the world with the message.' But that didn't seem to satisfy our minds. So then the 'Photo-Drama' was thought of."

¹⁴ What a ground-breaking undertaking the "Photo-Drama of Creation" was! It combined motion pictures and colored glass slides, synchronized with Bible talks and music on phonograph records. In 1913, *The Watch Tower* said of a convention in Arkansas, U.S.A.: "It was unanimously resolved that the time has come for the use of moving pictures in teaching Bible truths. . . . [Russell] explained that he had been at work

13. What problem did Macmillan and others see as to the fulfillment of Matthew 24:14?

14. Prior to 1914, what outstanding project was undertaken?

vast preaching work was necessary. They read: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." (Matthew 24:14, *King James Version*) How, though, could their relatively small group ever do that?

¹² Consider how this affected A. H. Macmillan, an associate of Russell. Born in Canada, Macmillan was not yet 20 when he obtained Russell's book *The Plan of the Ages* (1886). (This book, also called *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, became Volume 1 of the widely distributed set *Studies in the Scriptures*. Volume 2, *The Time Is at Hand* [1889], pointed to 1914 as the end of "the times of the Gentiles." [Luke 21:24, *KJ*]) The very night Macmillan began reading, he thought: "Well, that sounds like the truth!" In the summer of 1900, he met Russell at

12. How did one of Russell's associates respond to Bible truth?

upon this very plan for three years and now had almost ready hundreds of beautiful pictures, which will undoubtedly attract great crowds and herald the Gospel, and help the public back to faith in God."

¹⁵ The "Photo-Drama" did that very thing after its inaugural showing in January 1914. Following are reports from *The Watch Tower* of 1914:

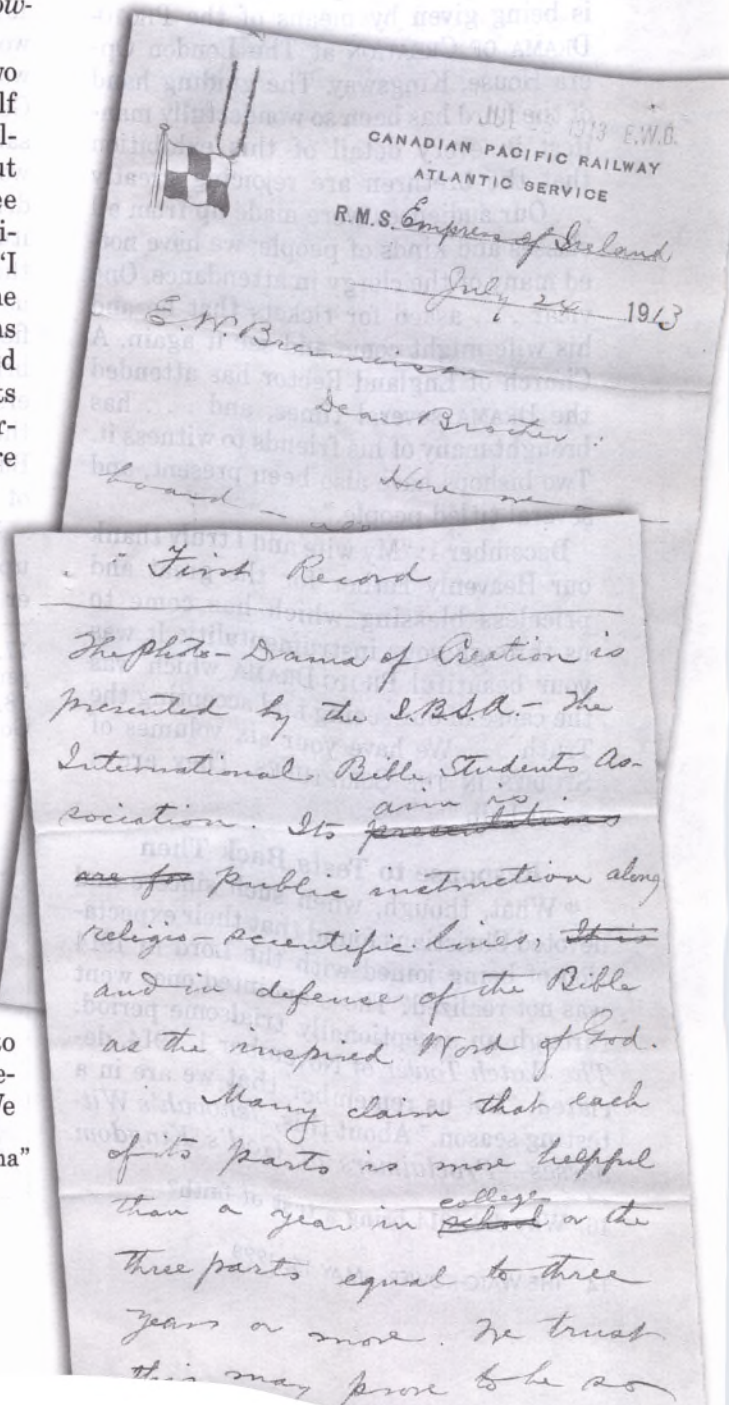
April 1: "A minister, after seeing two parts, said, 'I have seen only one-half of the PHOTO-DRAMA OF CREATION, but already have learned from it more about the Bible than I learned in my three years' course in the theological seminary.' A Jew after seeing it remarked, 'I go away a better Jew than when I came in.' Several Catholic priests and nuns have visited the DRAMA and expressed great appreciation. . . . Only twelve sets of the DRAMA are yet complete . . . Nevertheless we have already reached and are serving thirty-one cities . . . Over thirty-five thousand per day are seeing, hearing, admiring, thinking and being blessed."

June 15: "The pictures have made me more zealous to spread the Truth, and have increased my love for the Heavenly Father and our dear Elder Brother Jesus. I daily pray God's richest blessing upon the PHOTO-DRAMA OF CREATION and all engaged in its presentation . . . I am your servant in Him, F. W. KNOCHE.—Iowa."

July 15: "We are pleased to note what a wonderful impression for good the pictures have left in this city, and we feel assured that this witness to the world is also being used to gather in many who give evidence of being jewels of the Lord's own choosing. We

15. What sort of results did the "Photo-Drama" have?

A letter from C. T. Russell with introductory text for a recording in which he said:
 "'The Photo-Drama of Creation' is presented by the IBSA—the International Bible Students Association. Its aim is public instruction along religio-scientific lines, and in defense of the Bible"



The photograph shows two documents. The top document is a letter on Canadian Pacific Railway Atlantic Service stationery, dated July 24, 1913, addressed to E. W. Brannison. The bottom document is titled "First Record" and contains a handwritten report about the Photo-Drama of Creation.

Letter text (top):
 CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY
 ATLANTIC SERVICE
 R.M.S. *Empress of Ireland*
 July 24 1913
 E. W. Brannison
 Dear Brother:
 Board - Here -

First Record (bottom):
 The photo-Drama of Creation is presented by the I.B.S.A.—The International Bible Students Association. Its ^{aim is} ~~presentations~~ ~~are for~~ public instruction along religio-scientific lines, ~~it is~~ and in defense of the Bible as the inspired Word of God. Many claim that each of its parts is more helpful than a year in ^{college} ~~school~~ or the three parts equal to three years or more. We trust this may prove to be so.

know of quite a number of earnest Bible students who are now associated with the Class here as a result of the Photo-Drama work. . . . Your sister in the Lord, EMMA L. BRICKER."

November 15: "We feel sure you will be glad to hear of the splendid witness that is being given by means of the PHOTO-DRAMA OF CREATION at The London Opera House, Kingsway. The guiding hand of the Lord has been so wonderfully manifest in every detail of this exhibition that the brethren are rejoicing greatly . . . Our audiences were made up from all classes and kinds of people; we have noted many of the clergy in attendance. One vicar . . . asked for tickets that he and his wife might come and see it again. A Church of England Rector has attended the DRAMA several times, and . . . has brought many of his friends to witness it. Two bishops have also been present, and several titled people."

December 1: "My wife and I truly thank our Heavenly Father for the great and priceless blessing which has come to us through your instrumentality. It was your beautiful PHOTO-DRAMA which was the cause of our seeing and accepting the Truth . . . We have your six volumes of STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES. They are a great help."

Response to Tests Back Then

¹⁶ What, though, when such sincere and devoted Christians found that their expectation of being joined with the Lord in 1914 was not realized? Those anointed ones went through an exceptionally trialsome period. *The Watch Tower* of November 1, 1914, declared: "Let us remember that we are in a testing season." About this, *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*

16. Why did 1914 bring a test of faith?

(1993) states: "The years from 1914 to 1918 did, indeed, prove to be 'a testing season' for the Bible Students." Would they allow their faith to be refined and their thinking to be adjusted so that they could undertake the great work ahead?

¹⁷ *The Watch Tower* of September 1, 1916, said: "We imagined that the Harvest work of gathering the Church [the anointed] would be accomplished before the end of the Gentile Times; but nothing in the Bible so said. . . . Are we regretful that the Harvest work continues? . . . Our present attitude, dear brethren, should be one of great gratitude toward God, increasing appreciation of the beautiful Truth which He has granted us the privilege of seeing and being identified with, and increasing zeal in helping to bring that Truth to the knowledge of others." Their faith had been put to a test, yet they faced that test and met it successfully. But we Christians should be aware that tests of faith may be many and varied.

¹⁸ For example, another kind of test came upon the remnant shortly after Brother Charles T. Russell died. That was a test of

17. How did the faithful anointed ones react to remaining on earth past 1914?

18, 19. What other tests of faith followed for God's people soon after Brother Russell's death?

Do You Recall?

- ☐ Why should Jehovah's people expect that their faith will be tested?
- ☐ What sort of efforts to spread God's message were under way prior to 1914?
- ☐ What was the "Photo-Drama," and what results did it produce?
- ☐ How did events in the 1914-18 period serve to test the anointed?

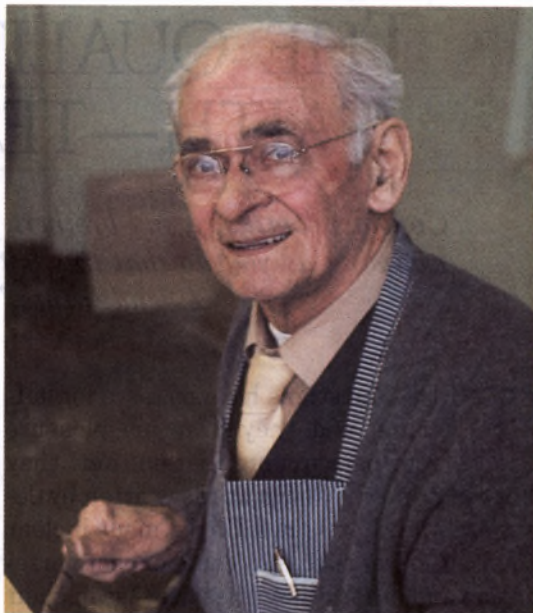
their loyalty and faith. Who was 'the faithful slave' of Matthew 24:45? Some felt that it was Brother Russell himself, and they balked at cooperating with new organizational arrangements. If he had been the slave, what were the brothers to do now that he had died? Should they follow some newly designated individual, or was it now time to recognize that Jehovah was using, not just one person, but an entire group of Christians as an instrument, or slave class?

¹⁹ An additional test came upon true Christians in 1918 when worldly authorities, goaded on by the clergy of Christendom, 'framed mischief by law' against Jehovah's organization. (Psalm 94:20, *KJ*) A wave of violent persecution was launched against the Bible Students both in North America and in Europe. The clergy-inspired opposition came to a head on May 7, 1918, when U.S. federal warrants were issued for the arrest of J. F. Rutherford and several of his close associates, including A. H. Macmillan. They were falsely accused of sedition, and the authorities ignored their pleas of innocence.

²⁰ Though not recognized as such then, a purifying work was under way, as described at Malachi 3:1-3: "Who will be putting up with the day of his coming, and who will be the one standing when he appears? For [the messenger of the covenant] will be like the fire of a refiner and like the lye of laundrymen. And he must sit as a refiner and cleanser of silver and must cleanse the sons of Levi; and he must clarify them like gold and like silver, and they will certainly become to Jehovah people presenting a gift offering in righteousness."

²¹ As World War I drew to a close, some of the Bible Students faced another test of faith—whether they would maintain strict

20, 21. As foretold at Malachi 3:1-3, what work was done among the anointed?



Demetrius Papageorge traveled showing the "Photo-Drama of Creation." Later, he was imprisoned because of his Christian neutrality

neutrality as to worldly military affairs. (John 17:16; 18:36) Some did not. So in 1918, Jehovah sent "the messenger of the covenant," Christ Jesus, to His spiritual temple arrangement to cleanse the small group of His worshipers from worldly blemishes. Those who were committed to displaying true faith learned from the experience and moved forward, zealously continuing to preach.

²² What we have considered is not just of passing historical interest. It is directly related to the present spiritual condition of Jehovah's worldwide congregation. But let us in the following article consider some of the tests of faith being faced by God's people today and see how we may successfully overcome these.

22. As to tests of faith, what remains to be considered?

THE QUALITY OF YOUR FAITH—TESTED NOW

"Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you meet with various trials, knowing as you do that this tested quality of your faith works out endurance."—JAMES 1:2, 3.

TRUE Christians have no taste for suffering, and they draw no pleasure from pain or humiliation. Yet, they bear in mind the above words written by Jesus' half brother James. Christ made it clear to his disciples that they could expect persecution and other difficulties because of their adhering to God's standards. (Matthew 10:34; 24:9-13; John 16:33) Nonetheless, joy can result from such tests. How so?

² A key reason that we find joy when under trials or tests of faith is that these can produce good fruitage. As James says, bearing up in the face of tests or difficulties "works out endurance." We can benefit from developing that valuable Christian quality. James wrote: "Let endurance have its work complete, that you may be complete and sound in all respects, not lacking in anything." (James 1:4) Endurance has a job to do, a "work." Its assignment is to make us complete in all respects, aiding us to be well rounded out as Christians. Hence, by letting trials run their course without any attempts to use unscriptural means to bring them to a swift end, our faith is tested and refined. If we have been lacking in

patience, compassion, kindness, or love in dealing with situations or with fellow humans, endurance can make us more complete. Yes, the sequence is: Tests produce endurance; endurance increases Christian qualities; these are a cause of joy.—1 Peter 4:14; 2 Peter 1:5-8.

³ The apostle Peter also highlighted why we need not fear or shrink back from tests of our faith. He wrote: "In this fact you are greatly rejoicing, though for a little while at present, if it must be, you have been grieved by various trials, in order that the tested quality of your faith, of much greater value than gold that perishes despite its being proved by fire, may be found a cause for praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (1 Peter 1:6, 7) These words are especially encouraging now because the "great tribulation"—the time of praise, glory, honor, and survival—is much closer than some may think and much closer than when we became believers.—Matthew 24:21; Romans 13:11, 12.

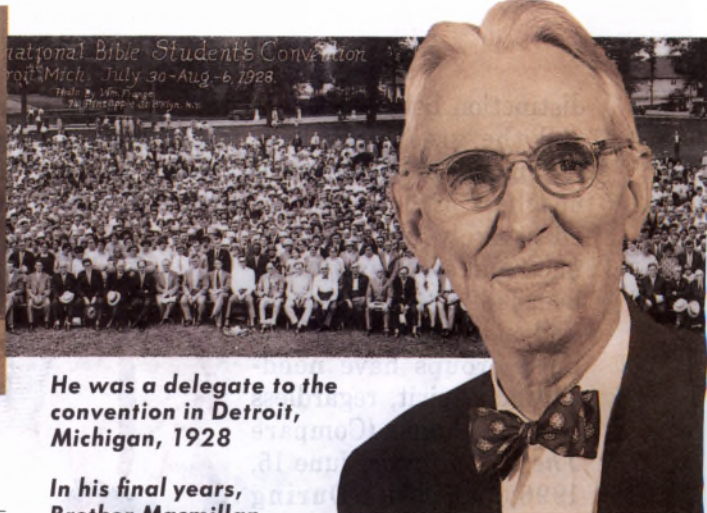
⁴ In the preceding article, we considered tests that the anointed remnant faced from 1914 onward. Were these a basis for joy? A. H. Macmillan offered this retrospective

1. Why should Christians expect tests of their faith?
2. (a) How can tests of our faith result in joy?
(b) How can endurance have its work complete in our case?

3. Why should we not shrink back in fear of trials or tests of faith?
4. How did one brother feel about tests that he and other anointed Christians had experienced?



A. H. Macmillan (front left) about the time he and officials of the Watch Tower Society were unjustly imprisoned



He was a delegate to the convention in Detroit, Michigan, 1928

In his final years, Brother Macmillan was still displaying faith

view: "I have seen many severe trials come upon the organization and testings of the faith of those in it. With the help of God's spirit it survived and continued to flourish. I have seen the wisdom of patiently waiting on Jehovah to clear up our understanding of Scriptural things instead of getting upset over a new thought. . . . No matter what adjustments we would have to make from time to time in our views, that would not change the gracious provision of the ransom and God's promise of eternal life. So there was no need for us to let our faith be weakened by unfulfilled expectations or changes in views."—*The Watchtower*, August 15, 1966, page 504.

⁵ Anointed Christians who survived the testing period of 1914-19 were freed from the dominating influence of the world and from many Babylonish religious practices. The remnant went forward as a cleansed and refined people, willingly offering sacrifices of praise to God and having the assurance that they as a people were acceptable to him. (Isaiah 52:11; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18) Judgment had begun with the house of God, but it would not be completed in one fixed period. The testing and the sifting of God's

5. (a) What benefits resulted from the remnant's undergoing tests? (b) Why should the matter of testing interest us now?

people continues. Those who hope to survive the approaching "great tribulation" as part of the "great crowd" are also having their faith tested. (Revelation 7:9, 14) This is being done in ways similar to what the anointed remnant faced as well as in other ways.

How Might You Be Tested?

⁶ Many Christians have thought about the challenge of standing up to tests in the form of direct frontal assaults. They recall this report: "[The Jewish leaders] summoned the apostles, flogged them, and ordered them to stop speaking upon the basis of Jesus' name, and let them go. These, therefore, went their way from before the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy to be dishonored in behalf of his name." (Acts 5:40, 41) And the modern history of God's people, especially during the world wars, makes it plain that many of Jehovah's Witnesses actually experienced beatings, and far worse, at the hands of persecutors.

⁷ With regard to Christians' being objects of persecution, the world makes no

6. What is one sort of severe test that many have experienced?

7. To what extent have some modern-day Christians gone in displaying faith?

distinction between the anointed remnant and the great crowd of "other sheep." (John 10:16) Down through the years, members of both groups have been tested severely by imprisonment and even martyrdom because of their love of God and their faith in him. Both groups have needed God's spirit, regardless of their hope. (Compare *The Watchtower*, June 15, 1996, page 31.) During the 1930's and 1940's in Nazi Germany, many of Jehovah's servants, including children, displayed extraordinary faith, and not a few were tested to the limit. In more recent times, Jehovah's people have faced the test of persecution in such lands as Burundi, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Singapore, and Zaire. And tests of this sort continue.

⁸ As already noted, however, our faith is also being tested in more subtle ways. Some of the tests are not so direct and easily identifiable. Consider how you would react to some of the following. A brother in Angola who had ten children was in a congregation that for a time was cut off from communication with responsible brothers. Later it became possible for others to visit the congregation. He was asked how he was managing to feed his family. It was not easy for him to answer, and all he would say was that the situation was difficult. Was he able to feed his children at least one meal a day? He

8. How do the comments of one African brother show that more is involved in the testing of our faith than enduring persecution in the form of beatings?

replied: "Well, hardly. We have learned to get by with what we have." Then with a voice full of conviction, he said: "But isn't this what we expect in these last days?" Such

faith is remarkable in the world, but it is not unusual among loyal Christians, who have full confidence that the Kingdom promises will be fulfilled.

⁹ The great crowd are also being tested in connection with theocratic procedures. The worldwide Christian congregation is directed according to divine principles and theocratic standards. This means first of all recognizing Jesus as the Leader, the one appointed as Head of the congregation. (1 Corinthians 11:3) Willing submission to him and to his Father is mani-

festated through our faith in theocratic appointments and decisions related to our unitedly doing Jehovah's will. Furthermore, in each local congregation, there are men appointed to take the lead. They are imperfect men whose faults we may readily see; yet we are urged to respect such overseers and to be submissive. (Hebrews 13:7, 17) Do you at times find that challenging? Is this really a test for you? If so, are you benefiting from this test of your faith?

¹⁰ We are also tested in connection with the privilege and requirement to engage regularly in the field ministry. For us to pass this test, we must realize that having a full share in the ministry involves more than

9. How are we being tested in connection with 1 Corinthians 11:3?

10. What test do we face as regards the field ministry?



Like this family, many Christians in Africa have displayed a tested quality of faith

a minimal, or token, amount of preaching. Recall Jesus' approving comment about the poor widow who gave her all. (Mark 12:41-44) We might ask ourselves, 'Am I similarly giving of myself in connection with my field ministry?' All of us are to be Witnesses of Jehovah all day long, ready at every opportunity to let our light shine. —Matthew 5:16.

¹¹ Another test we might face relates to the degree of our appreciation for the increasing light being shed on Bible truth and for the counsel provided by the faithful slave class. (Matthew 24:45) Sometimes this calls for adjustments in personal conduct, such as when it became clear that those who use tobacco would have to quit if they wanted to remain in the congregation.* (2 Corinthians 7:1) Or the test may be in our accepting the need to modify our taste in music or certain other forms of entertainment.# Will we question the wisdom of the counsel offered? Or will we let God's spirit mold our thinking and help us to put on the Christian personality?—Ephesians 4:20-24; 5:3-5.

¹² For decades, the number of those of the great crowd has been increasing, and after their baptism they are continuing to strengthen their relationship with Jehovah. This involves more than attending a Christian assembly, going to some meetings at the Kingdom Hall, or occasionally sharing in field service. To illustrate: A person may be physically outside of Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion,

* See *The Watchtower* of June 1, 1973, pages 336-43, and July 1, 1973, pages 409-11.

See *The Watchtower* of July 15, 1983, pages 27-31.

11. How can changes in understanding or counsel on conduct be a test?

12. What is needed to strengthen faith after one is baptized?

but has he truly left it behind? Does he still cling to those things that reflect the spirit of Babylon the Great—a spirit that flouts God's righteous standards? Does he treat morality and marital faithfulness lightly? Does he emphasize personal and material interests more than spiritual interests? Yes, has he remained unspotted by the world? —James 1:27.

Benefit From Tested Faith

¹³ If we have truly fled from Babylon the Great and have also come out of the world, let us not look at the things behind. In line with the principle found at Luke 9:62, for any of us to look back could mean losing out on being a subject of God's Kingdom. Jesus said: "No man that has put his hand to a plow and looks at the things behind is well fitted for the kingdom of God."

¹⁴ But some who became Christians in the past have since then allowed themselves to be fashioned after this system of things. They have not resisted the spirit of the world. (2 Peter 2:20-22) Worldly distractions have absorbed their interest and time, thus impeding their progress. Instead of keeping their minds and hearts fixed firmly on God's Kingdom and his righteousness, putting such first in life, they have turned aside to pursue materialistic goals. Unless they are moved to acknowledge their weak faith and lukewarm state and to change their course by seeking divine counsel, they are in danger of losing their precious relationship with Jehovah and his organization. —Revelation 3:15-19.

¹⁵ Our being found approved and in line for surviving the fast-approaching great tribulation depends on our keeping clean,

13, 14. What have some done after starting on the way of true worship?

15. What does it take to remain acceptable to God?

having our robes 'washed in the blood of the Lamb.' (Revelation 7:9-14; 1 Corinthians 6:11) If we do not maintain a clean, righteous standing before God, our sacred service will not be acceptable. Surely, each one of us should realize that the tested quality of faith will help us to endure and to avoid incurring God's displeasure.

¹⁶ At times, the news media and secular authorities pin false labels on God's people, misrepresenting our Christian beliefs and way of life. This should not surprise us, for Jesus clearly shows that the 'world would hate us because we are no part of it.' (John 17:14) Will we allow those who are blinded by Satan to intimidate and dishearten us and make us feel ashamed of the good news? Will we permit lies about the truth to affect our regular meeting attendance and our preaching activity? Or will we stand fast and be courageous and more determined than ever to continue declaring the truth about Jehovah and his Kingdom?

¹⁷ According to fulfilled Bible prophecy, we are now living deep in the time of the end. Our Bible-based expectations for a new world of righteousness are certain to become a delightful reality. Until that day comes, may all of us exercise unshakable faith in God's Word and prove our faith by not letting up in preaching the good news of the Kingdom worldwide. Think of the thousands of new disciples being baptized every week. Is that not reason enough for us to appreciate that Jehovah's patience regarding the execution of his judgment can result in the salvation of many more people? Are we not joyful that God has allowed the lifesaving Kingdom-preaching activity to continue? And are we not delighted that

16. In what ways may lies prove to be a test of our faith?

17. What assurance can stimulate us to continue showing faith?

millions have accepted the truth and are demonstrating their faith?

¹⁸ How long the present testing of our faith will continue we cannot say. But this much is certain: Jehovah has a fixed day of reckoning for the present wicked heavens and earth. Meanwhile, let us be determined to imitate the sterling quality of tested faith manifested by the Perfecter of our faith, Jesus. And let us follow the example of the aging anointed remnant and that of others who are courageously serving among us.

¹⁹ We should be determined to declare without letup the everlasting good news to every nation, tribe, tongue, and people in cooperation with the angel flying in mid-heaven. Let them hear the angelic declaration: "Fear God and give him glory, because the hour of the judgment by him has arrived." (Revelation 14:6, 7) When that divine judgment is rendered, what will be the result as regards the tested quality of our faith? Will it not be a glorious triumph—deliverance from the present system of things into God's righteous new world? By enduring the tests of our faith, we will be able to say, as did the apostle John: "This is the conquest that has conquered the world, our faith."—1 John 5:4.

18. What is your determination as to serving Jehovah?

19. What can you be sure will conquer this world?

Do You Recall?

- ☐ How is it that tests of our faith can be a cause for joy?
- ☐ What are some tests of our faith that may not be easily identified?
- ☐ How can we benefit by successfully enduring tests of our faith?

REACHING HEARTS WITH THE ART OF PERSUASION

MANY people regard the word “persuasion” with suspicion. It may suggest to one’s mind a pushy salesperson or an advertisement designed to deceive or manipulate the consumer. Even in the Bible, the idea of persuasion sometimes has negative connotations, denoting a corrupting or a leading astray. For example, the Christian apostle Paul wrote to the Galatians: “You were running well. Who hindered you from keeping on obeying the truth? This sort of persuasion is not from the One calling you.” (Galatians 5:7, 8) Paul also warned the Colossians against letting anyone ‘delude them with persuasive arguments.’ (Colossians 2:4) Such persuasion depends on clever arguments built on false foundations.

In his second letter to Timothy, however, the apostle Paul used the idea of persuasion in a different sense. He wrote: “Continue in the things that you learned and were persuaded to believe, knowing from what persons you learned them.” (2 Timothy 3:14) In being “persuaded to believe,” Timothy was not being manipulated by his mother and his grandmother, through whom he learned Scriptural truths.—2 Timothy 1:5.*

While under house arrest in Rome, Paul bore thorough witness to many, “using persuasion with them concerning Jesus from both the law of Moses and the Prophets,

from morning till evening.” (Acts 28:23) Was Paul deceiving his audience? By no means! Clearly, then, persuasion is not always a bad thing.

Used in a positive sense, the Greek root word translated “persuade” means to convince, to bring about a change of mind by means of sound, logical reasoning. A teacher can thus build on a Scriptural foundation, using persuasion to instill in others a conviction of Bible truth. (2 Timothy 2:15) Indeed, this was a mark of Paul’s ministry. Even Demetrius the silversmith, who considered Christian teachings to be false, noted: “Not only in Ephesus but in nearly all the district of Asia this Paul has persuaded a considerable crowd and turned them to another opinion, saying that the ones that are made by hands are not gods.”—Acts 19:26.

Using Persuasion in the Ministry

Jesus Christ instructed his followers: “Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you. And, look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things.” (Matthew 28:19, 20) In over 230 lands, Jehovah’s Witnesses are obeying this command. Each month during their 1997 service year, they conducted an average of 4,552,589 home Bible studies worldwide.

If you are privileged to conduct a home Bible study, you might be able to anticipate

* See the article “Eunice and Lois—Exemplary Educators,” on pages 7-9 of this issue of *The Watchtower*.

challenges that will require using the art of persuasion. For example, suppose that at your next study session, a question should arise regarding the Trinity. What if you know that your student believes this doctrine? You could give him a publication that discusses that subject. After he has read it, you may find that he has been persuaded that God and Jesus are not the same. But if some questions remain, how can you proceed?

Listen carefully. This will help you to determine what your student already believes about a given subject. For example, if your student says, "I believe in the Trinity," you could quickly undertake a Scriptural discussion to disprove this doctrine. But there are various beliefs regarding the Trinity. Your student may believe something quite different from what you would define as the Trinity doctrine. The same might be said of other beliefs, such as reincarnation, the immortality of the soul, and salvation. So listen carefully before speaking. Do not make assumptions about what the student believes. —Proverbs 18:13.

Ask questions. These might include: 'Have you always believed in the Trinity? Did you ever make a thorough study of what the Bible says on this subject? If God were part of a trinity, would not his Word, the Bible, clearly and directly tell us so?' In teaching the student, periodically stop to ask such questions as these: 'Does what we have covered so far make sense to you?' 'Do you agree with this explanation?' By your skillful use of questions, you involve the student in the learning process. He should not simply be listening to you expound on a subject.

Use sound reasoning. In discussing the Trinity doctrine, for example, you could say to your student: 'When Jesus was baptized, a voice came out of heaven, saying: "You are my Son, the beloved." If God were truly

ly on earth being baptized, would he project his voice up to heaven and back so that those words could be heard on the earth? Would that not be misleading? Would God, "who cannot lie," do such a deceptive thing?" —Luke 3:21, 22; Titus 1:1, 2.

Sound reasoning presented in a tactful manner is often quite effective. Consider the example of a woman we will call Barbara. All her life, she had believed that Jesus was God and part of a trinity that included the holy spirit. But then one of Jehovah's Witnesses told her that God and Jesus are two distinct individuals, and he showed her scriptures to support his statement.* Barbara could not refute the Bible. At the same time, she was frustrated. After all, the Trinity doctrine was dear to her heart.

The Witness patiently reasoned with Barbara. "If you were trying to teach me that two persons are equal," he asked, "what family relationship would you use to illustrate it?" She thought for a moment and then replied: "I might use two brothers." "Exactly," the Witness responded. "Perhaps even identical twins. But in teaching us to view God as *the Father* and himself as *the Son*, what message was Jesus conveying?" "I see," Barbara replied, her eyes widening. "He is describing one as older and having more authority."

"Yes," answered the Witness, "and Jesus' Jewish audience, living in a patriarchal society, would especially have reached that conclusion." Driving home his point, the Witness concluded: "If we came up with such a fitting illustration to teach equality—that of brothers or identical twins—sure—

* See John 14:28; Philippians 2:5, 6; Colossians 1:13-15. For more information, see the brochure *Should You Believe in the Trinity?*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc.

ly Jesus, the Great Teacher, could have done so too. Instead, he used the terms 'father' and 'son' to describe the relationship between himself and God."

Barbara finally understood the point, and she accepted it. Her heart had been reached with the art of persuasion.

Dealing With Emotions

Strongly entrenched religious beliefs often involve an emotional component. Consider the case of Edna, a devout Catholic. Her teenage grandsons presented her with clear Scriptural proof that God and Jesus are not the same person. Edna understood what she heard. Nevertheless, she kindly but firmly stated: "I believe in the holy Trinity."

Perhaps you have had a similar experience. Many view the doctrines of their religion as if these were part of their very identity. To persuade such Bible students, more is needed than cold logic or even a series of scriptures proving the person's viewpoint to be erroneous. Such situations can be well handled by balancing the art of persuasion with compassion. (Compare Romans 12:15; Colossians 3:12.) Granted, an effective teacher should have strong convictions. For example, Paul used such phrases as "I am convinced" and "I know and am persuaded in the Lord Jesus." (Romans 8:38; 14:14) However, in expressing our convictions, we should not take on a dogmatic, self-righteous tone, nor should we be sarcastic or demeaning in presenting Bible truths. We certainly do not want to offend or even insult the student.—Proverbs 12:18.

It is far more effective to respect the student's beliefs and recognize his right to possess them. Humility is the key. A teacher with lowliness of mind does not feel that he is inherently superior to his student. (Luke 18:9-14; Philippians 2:3, 4) Godly persua-

REACHING YOUR STUDENT'S HEART

- ☐ Pray for Jehovah's direction in reaching the heart of the Bible student.—Nehemiah 2:4, 5; Isaiah 50:4.
- ☐ Discern what the student believes and why he may find a false belief appealing.—Acts 17:22, 23.
- ☐ In a kind, patient manner, build a logical, Scriptural argument while maintaining common ground.—Acts 17:24-34.
- ☐ If possible, reinforce Bible truths with effective illustrations.—Mark 4:33, 34.
- ☐ Show the student the benefits of accepting accurate knowledge from the Bible.—1 Timothy 2:3, 4; 2 Timothy 3:14, 15.

sion includes a humility that, in effect, says: 'Jehovah has mercifully helped me to see this. Let me share it with you.'

To his fellow Christians in Corinth, Paul wrote: "The weapons of our warfare are not fleshly, but powerful by God for overturning strongly entrenched things. For we are overturning reasonings and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God; and we are bringing every thought into captivity to make it obedient to the Christ." (2 Corinthians 10:4, 5) Today, Jehovah's Witnesses are using God's Word to overturn strongly entrenched false doctrines as well as deeply embedded practices and traits that displease him. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) In doing this, the Witnesses remember that Jehovah has lovingly been patient with them. How happy they are to have his Word, the Bible, and to use this powerful tool to uproot false teachings and reach hearts with the art of persuasion!

YOU CAN MAKE SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

TRUE worth can be difficult to recognize. Such is the case with diamonds. Although a polished diamond sparkles, a rough diamond merely glows dimly. Nevertheless, in the depths of the rough diamond lies the unmistakable promise of a beautiful gem.

Christians resemble rough diamonds in many ways. Though we are still a long way from perfection, we do have an underlying worth that Jehovah values. Like diamonds, all of us have our own distinct qualities. And each one of us can make further spiritual progress if that is our heartfelt desire. Our personalities can be polished, so that they shine more brightly to Jehovah's glory.—1 Corinthians 10:31.

After being cut and polished, a diamond is placed in a setting that enhances its reflective qualities. Similarly, Jehovah can use us in different settings, or assignments, if we "put on the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty."—Ephesians 4:20-24.

Such spiritual progress may not come naturally, just as a diamond in its natural state rarely sparkles like a gem. We might need to rid ourselves of some linger-

ing weakness, adjust our attitude toward assuming responsibility, or even exert ourselves to get out of a spiritual rut. But we can make progress if we really want to, since Jehovah God can give us "the power beyond what is normal."—2 Corinthians 4:7; Philippians 4:13.

Jehovah Strengthens His Servants

Cutting diamonds takes confidence that results from exact knowledge, since once a part of the rough diamond is cut away, it usually is lost. Expensive material—sometimes as much as 50 percent of the uncut stone—has to be cut away to produce the desired shape. We too need confidence resulting from accurate knowledge in order to shape our personality and to progress spiritually. Especially must we have confidence that Jehovah will empower us.

We may feel inadequate, however, or think that we are not able to do more. In the past, faithful servants of God sometimes felt that way. (Exodus 3:11, 12; 1 Kings 19:1-4) When assigned by God to be a "prophet to the nations," Jeremiah exclaimed: "Here I actually do not know how to speak, for I am but a boy." (Jeremiah 1:5, 6) Despite his reticence, though, Jeremiah became a courageous prophet who delivered forthright messages to a hostile people. How was this



possible? He learned to rely on Jehovah. Jeremiah later wrote: "Blessed is the able-bodied man who puts his trust in Jehovah, and whose confidence Jehovah has become." —Jeremiah 17:7; 20:11.

Today, Jehovah likewise strengthens those who put their trust in him. Edward,* a father of four who was slow to make spiritual progress, found this to be true. He explains: "I had been one of Jehovah's Witnesses for nine years, but I seemed to be standing still spiritually. The problem was that I had little motivation and no confidence. After moving to Spain, I found myself in a small congregation that had just one elder and one ministerial servant. In view of the need, the elder asked me to handle many assignments. I trembled as I gave my first talks and meeting parts. Yet, I learned to lean on Jehovah. The elder always commended me and offered tactful suggestions for improvement.

"At the same time, I increased my field service activity and took a better spiritual lead in my family. As a result, the truth had greater meaning for all the family, and I felt so much more satisfied. I am now a ministerial servant, and I am working hard to develop the qualities of a Christian overseer."

"Strip Off the Old Personality"

As Edward realized, spiritual progress requires trust in Jehovah. Developing the Christlike "new personality" is also essential. How can this be done? A first step is to "strip off" those traits that are part of the old personality. (Colossians 3:9, 10) Just as imperfections, such as foreign minerals, have to be removed from a rough diamond to make it a sparkling gem, so attitudes "belonging to the world" need to be discarded in order that our new personality may shine through.—Galatians 4:3.

* Substitute names are used in this article.

One such attitude is a reluctance to accept responsibility for fear that too much will be required of us. True, responsibility means work, but it is a satisfying work. (Compare Acts 20:35.) Paul admitted that godly devotion requires that we 'work hard and exert ourselves.' We do so gladly, he said, "because we have rested our hope on a living God," one who never forgets the work we do in behalf of our fellow Christians and others.—1 Timothy 4:9, 10; Hebrews 6:10.

Some diamonds suffer from "tension" created at their formation and need to be handled carefully. With help from an instrument called a polariscope, however, the polisher can locate the tension and can work on the stone successfully. Perhaps we suffer from an internal tension, or personality flaw, because of our background or a traumatic experience. What can we do? First, we need to admit the problem to ourselves and determine to overcome it to the extent possible. We should certainly unburden ourselves before Jehovah in prayer, possibly also seeking spiritual help from a Christian elder.—Psalm 55:22; James 5:14, 15.

Such inner tension affected Nicholas. "My father was an alcoholic, and he caused my sister and me much suffering," he explains. "When I left school, I joined the army, but my rebellious streak soon got me into trouble. Army authorities jailed me for dealing in drugs, and on another occasion I deserted. Finally, I left the army, but I still had trouble. Although my life was a mess because of drug abuse and heavy drinking, I had an interest in the Bible and longed to have a purpose in life. Eventually, I came into contact with Jehovah's Witnesses, changed my life-style, and embraced the truth.

"It took years, however, before I came to terms with a defect in my personality. I had a deep dislike for authority and bristled

when any counsel came my way. Though I wanted to be used fully by Jehovah, this weakness held me back. Finally, with the help of two understanding elders, I admitted my problem and began to apply their loving Scriptural counsel. Although a little resentment occasionally flares up, I have now controlled my rebellious nature. I am very grateful for Jehovah's patient way of dealing with me and for the loving help of the elders. Because of my spiritual progress, I have recently been appointed as a ministerial servant."

As Nicholas discovered, changing deep-seated attitudes is not easy. We may face a similar challenge. Perhaps we are overly sensitive. We may be nursing a grievance, or we may be placing too much emphasis on independence. Thus, our Christian progress may be limited. Diamond polishers experience something similar with stones they call *naats*. These are really two stones melted into one during the diamond's formation. As a result, *naats* have two conflicting growth patterns that make cutting according to the grain very difficult. In our case, we find the "grain" of the willing spirit battling against the "grain" of the imperfect flesh. (Matthew 26:41; Galatians 5:17) Sometimes, we may feel inclined to give up the struggle altogether, rationalizing that imperfections in our personality are not important anyway. 'After all,' we may say, 'my family and friends still love me.'

If we are to serve our brothers and glorify our heavenly Father, however, we need to 'be made new in the force actuating our mind' by putting on the new personality. The effort is worthwhile, as Nicholas and countless others can testify. A diamond polisher knows that one blemish can mar the whole diamond. Likewise, by neglecting a weak facet of our personality, we can spoil

our spiritual appearance. Worse still, a serious weakness could lead to our spiritual downfall.—Proverbs 8:33.

Like a "Fire" Within Us

The diamond polisher seeks to capture the fire within the diamond. This is done by arranging the facets so that they cause the so-called rainbow effect. Inside the diamond the multicolored light reflects back and forth, producing the fire that makes diamonds sparkle. Similarly, God's spirit can be like a "fire" within us.—1 Thessalonians 5:19; Acts 18:25; Romans 12:11.

But what if we sense the need to get spiritually motivated? How can this be done? We need to 'consider our ways.' (Psalm 119:59, 60) This would involve identifying those things that slow us down spiritually and then determining which theocratic activities we need to pursue more vigorously. We can deepen spiritual appreciation through regular personal study and fervent prayer. (Psalm 119:18, 32; 143:1, 5, 8, 10) Moreover, by associating with those who work hard in the faith, we will further strengthen our resolve to serve Jehovah zealously.—Titus 2:14.

Louise, a young Christian woman, admitted: "I considered regular pioneering for two years before I actually enrolled as a pioneer, or full-time Kingdom proclaimer. There was nothing stopping me, but I was in a comfortable rut, and I just didn't make the effort to get out of it. Then my father died suddenly. I realized how fragile life is and that I wasn't making the best use of mine. So I changed my spiritual outlook, increased my service, and became a regular pioneer. Of particular help in this regard were those of my spiritual brothers and sisters who always supported the field service arrangements and who regularly accompanied me in the ministry. I have learned that

whether for good or for bad, we share the values and goals of our associates.”

Sharpened as if by Iron

Diamonds are the hardest naturally occurring substance on earth. Hence, it takes one diamond to cut another. This may remind Bible students of the proverb that says: “By iron, iron itself is sharpened. So one man sharpens the face of another.” (Proverbs 27:17) How is a person’s face “sharpened”? One individual may succeed in sharpening the intellectual and spiritual state of another, just as a piece of iron can be used to sharpen a blade made of the same metal. For instance, if we should become depressed over some disappointment, another person’s encouragement can be very uplifting. Our sad countenance can thus change for the better, and we can be enlivened for renewed zealous activity. (Proverbs 13:12) Especially can congregation elders help to sharpen us by providing Scriptural encouragement and counsel for improvement. They follow the principle stated by Solomon: “Give to a wise person and he will become still wiser. Impart knowledge to someone righteous and he will increase in learning.”—Proverbs 9:9.

Of course, spiritual training takes time. For more than ten years, the apostle Paul shared his experience and teaching methods with Timothy. (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Timothy 4:6, 16) The lengthy training that Moses gave Joshua over a 40-year period benefited the nation of Israel for a long time. (Joshua 1:1, 2; 24:29, 31) Elisha accompanied the prophet Elijah for perhaps 6 years, receiving a fine grounding for his own ministry that was to last about 60 years. (1 Kings 19:21; 2 Kings 3:11) By patiently providing ongoing training, elders follow the example of Paul, Moses, and Elijah.

Giving commendation is a vital part of training. Sincere expressions of appreciation for assignments well handled or for praiseworthy acts may impel others to want to serve God more fully. Commendation builds confidence that, in turn, provides incentive to work on weaknesses. (Compare 1 Corinthians 11:2.) Encouragement to progress in the truth also comes from being intensely occupied with the Kingdom-preaching work and other congregational activities. (Acts 18:5) When elders assign brothers responsibility in accord with their spiritual progress, this gives these men valuable experience and is likely to strengthen their desire to keep on progressing spiritually.—Philippians 1:8, 9.

Good Reason for Making Spiritual Progress

Diamonds are considered precious. The same is true of those now becoming associated with the worldwide family of Jehovah’s worshipers. In fact, God himself calls them the “desirable,” or “precious,” things of all the nations. (Haggai 2:7, footnote) Last year, 375,923 became baptized Witnesses of Jehovah. To accommodate this growth, there is a need to ‘make the tent more spacious.’ By progressing spiritually—and by reaching out for Christian service privileges—it is possible to have a share in caring for this expansion.—Isaiah 54:2; 60:22.

Unlike many precious diamonds that are kept in bank vaults and are rarely seen, our spiritual worth can shine brightly. And as we regularly polish and manifest our Christian qualities, we glorify Jehovah God. Jesus exhorted his followers: “Let your light shine before men, that they may see your fine works and give glory to your Father who is in the heavens.” (Matthew 5:16) Surely, that gives us sound reason to make spiritual progress.

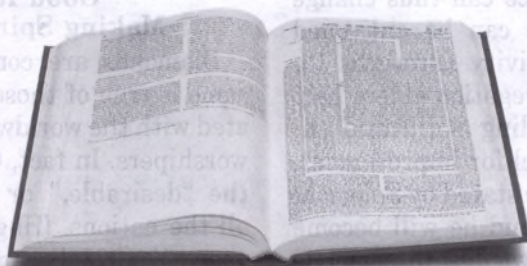
What Is the T A L M U D ?

"The Talmud is undoubtedly one of the most remarkable literary productions of all times."

—*The Universal Jewish Encyclopedia.*

"[The Talmud is] one of the great intellectual accomplishments of humankind, a document so dense, so rich, so subtle that it has kept superb minds busy for more than a millennium and a half." —*Jacob Neusner, Jewish scholar and author.*

"The Talmud is the central pillar [of Judaism] supporting the entire spiritual and intellectual edifice of Jewish life." —*Adin Steinsaltz, Talmudic scholar and rabbi.*



THE Talmud has unquestionably had a tremendous influence on the Jewish people for centuries. In contrast with the above-quoted accolades, however, the Talmud has been denigrated and called "a sea of obscurity and mud." It has been denounced as a blasphemous work of the Devil. By papal decree, it was repeatedly censored, confiscated, and even burned in large numbers in the public squares of Europe.

Exactly what is this work that has stirred so much controversy? What makes the Talmud unique among Jewish writings? Why was it written? How has it come to have such an impact on Judaism? Does it have meaning for the non-Jewish world?

During the 150 years following the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in

70 C.E., academies of rabbinic sages throughout Israel urgently sought a new basis for main-

taining Jewish practice. They debated and consolidated various traditions of their oral law. Building on this foundation, they set new limits and requirements for Judaism, giving direction for a day-to-day life of holiness without a temple. This new spiritual framework was outlined in the Mishnah, compiled by Judah ha-Nasi by the beginning of the third century C.E.*

The Mishnah stood on its own, not seeking justification on the basis of Biblical references. Its method of discussion and even

* For more information on the development and content of the Mishnah, see the article "The Mishnah and God's Law to Moses" in *The Watchtower* of November 15, 1997.

the style of its Hebrew were unique, distinct from the Bible text. The decisions of the rabbis quoted in the Mishnah would affect the day-to-day lives of Jews everywhere. Indeed, Jacob Neusner comments: "The Mishnah provided Israel's constitution. . . . It demanded assent and conformity to its rules."

But what if some questioned whether the authority of the sages quoted in the Mishnah was really equal to revealed Scripture? The rabbis would have to show that teachings of the Tannaim (teachers of the oral law) found in the Mishnah were in perfect harmony with the Hebrew Scriptures. Further commentary became a necessity. They felt the need to explain and justify the Mishnah and prove that it originated with the Law given to Moses at Sinai. The rabbis felt compelled to prove that the oral and written law are of one spirit and purpose. Rather than being the final word on Judaism, then, the Mishnah became a new foundation for religious discussion and debate.

The Talmud in the Making

The rabbis who took up this new challenge were known as Amoraim—"interpreters," or "explainers," of the Mishnah. Each academy centered around a prominent rabbi. A small circle of scholars and students held discussions all year. But the most important sessions were held biannually, during the months of Adar and Elul, when agricultural work was slack and hundreds or even thousands more could attend.

Adin Steinsaltz explains: "The academy head presided, seated on a chair or on special mats. In the front rows opposite him sat the important scholars, including his colleagues or outstanding pupils, and behind them all the other scholars. . . . The order of seating was based on a precisely defined hierarchy [according to importance]."

A portion of the Mishnah would be recited. This would then be compared with parallel or supplementary material gathered by the Tannaim but not included in the Mishnah. The process of analysis would begin. Questions were posed, and contradictions were analyzed to find internal harmony between teachings. Proof texts from the Hebrew Scriptures were sought to support rabbinic teachings.

Although carefully structured, these discussions were intense, sometimes turbulent. One sage quoted in the Talmud spoke of "sparks of fire" leaping between the mouths of the rabbis during a debate. (Hullin 137b, Babylonian Talmud) Steinsaltz says this of the proceedings: "The academy head, or the sage delivering the lecture, would give his own interpretation of problems. The scholars in the audience would often bombard him with questions on the basis of other sources, the views of other commentators, or their own logical conclusions. Sometimes the debate was very brief and restricted to an unequivocal and conclusive response to a given question. In other cases other scholars would offer alternative solutions and a large-scale debate would ensue." All in attendance were free to take part. Issues clarified at the sessions would be transmitted to other academies for other scholars to review.

Yet, these sessions were not just endless legalistic debates. Legal matters dealing with rules and regulations of Jewish religious life are called Halakah. This term comes from the Hebrew root "to go" and indicates the 'way of life one should go by.' All other matters—stories about rabbis and Bible characters, wise sayings, concepts of belief and philosophy—are called Haggadah, from the Hebrew root "to tell." Halakah and Haggadah were intermingled during rabbinic debate.

In his book *The World of the Talmud*, Morris Adler comments: "A wise teacher would interrupt a lengthy and difficult legal argument with a digression of a less taxing and more edifying nature. . . . Thus we find legend and history, contemporary science and folklore, Biblical exegesis and biography, homily and theology woven together into what, to one unfamiliar with the ways of the academies, would seem to be a curious medley of unorganized data." To the scholars at the academies, all such digressions were for a purpose and were related to the point under discussion. Halakah and Haggadah were the building blocks of a new structure under construction in the rabbinic academies.

The Making of Two Talmuds

Eventually, the main rabbinic center in Palestine moved to Tiberias. Other important academies were located at Sepphoris, Caesarea, and Lydda. But the deteriorating economic situation, constant political instability, and finally the pressure and persecution from apostate Christianity led to large-scale immigration to another major Jewish population center to the East—Babylonia.

For centuries, students had flocked from Babylonia to Palestine to study under the great rabbis at the academies. One such student was Abba ben Ibo, also called Abba Arika—Abba the tall one—but later known simply as Rab. He returned to Babylonia about 219 C.E. after studying under Judah ha-Nasi, and this marked a turning point for the spiritual importance of the Babylonian Jewish community. Rab set up an academy at Sura, an area with many Jews but little scholarship. His reputation drew 1,200 regular students to his academy, with thousands more in attendance during the Jewish months of Adar and Elul. Rab's prominent contemporary, Samuel, set up an academy

in Nehardea. Other important academies sprang up at Pumbeditha and Mehoza.

Now there was no necessity to travel to Palestine, for one could study under the great scholars in Babylonia. The formulation of the Mishnah as a separate text paved the way for the complete independence of the Babylonian academies. Although different styles and methods of study now developed in Palestine and Babylonia, frequent communication and interchange of teachers preserved the unity of the academies.

Toward the end of the fourth and in the beginning of the fifth centuries C.E., the situation became particularly difficult for the Jews in Palestine. Waves of restrictions and persecution under the rising authority of apostate Christendom led to the final blow of abolishing both the Sanhedrin and the position of Nasi (patriarch) by about 425 C.E. So the Palestinian Amoraim began consolidating in a single coherent work the summaries of the debates in the academies to ensure their preservation. This work, compiled in haste in the latter part of the fourth century C.E., became known as the Palestinian Talmud.*

While the academies in Palestine were on the decline, the Babylonian Amoraim were reaching the peak of their abilities. Abaye and Raba took the level of debate into intricate and subtle argumentation that later became the model of Talmudic analysis. Next, Ashi, the head of the academy at Sura (371-427 C.E.), began compiling and editing the summations of debates. According to Steinsaltz, he did so "fearing that, disorganized as it was, the vast bulk of oral material was in danger of sinking into oblivion."

* The Palestinian Talmud is popularly known as the Jerusalem Talmud. However, this term is a misnomer, since Jerusalem was off limits to the Jews during most of the Amoraic period.

THE TWO TALMUDS—HOW DO THEY COMPARE?

The Hebrew word "Talmud" means "study" or "learning." The Amoraim of Palestine and Babylonia had set out to study, or analyze, the Mishnah. Both Talmuds (Palestinian and Babylonian) do this, but how do they compare? Jacob Neusner writes: "The first Talmud analyzes evidence, the second investigates premises; the first remains wholly within the limits of its case, the second vastly transcends them."

The more intensive and thorough editing giv-

en to the Babylonian Talmud made it not only much larger but also deeper and more penetrating in its mode of thought and analysis. When the word "Talmud" is mentioned, it is usually the Babylonian Talmud that is meant. This is the Talmud that has been most studied and commented on throughout the centuries. In the opinion of Neusner, the Palestinian Talmud "is a work of competence," and the Babylonian Talmud "is a work of genius."

This great mass of material was more than one man or even one generation could organize. The period of the Amoraim ended in Babylonia in the fifth century C.E., but the work of final editing of the Babylonian Talmud was continued into the sixth century C.E. by a group called the Saboraim, an Aramaic term meaning "the expositors," or "holders of opinion." These final editors pulled together the thousands of loose ends and the centuries of rabbinic debate, imparting a style and structure to the Babylonian Talmud that set it apart from all previous Jewish writings.

What Did the Talmud Accomplish?

The rabbis of the Talmud set out to prove that the Mishnah was from the same source as the Hebrew Scriptures. But why? Jacob Neusner comments: "The stated issue was the standing of the Mishnah. But the heart of the matter turns out to have been the authority of the sage himself." To reinforce this authority, each line of the Mishnah, sometimes every word, was examined, challenged, explained, and harmonized in a fashion. Neusner observes that in this way the rabbis "shifted the orbit of the Mishnah from one path to another." Although created as a work complete in itself, the Mishnah

had now been dissected. During this process, it had been recreated, redefined.

This new work—the Talmud—served the rabbis' purpose. They set the rules of analysis, and it therefore taught people to think like rabbis. The rabbis believed that their method of study and analysis reflected the mind of God. Talmudic study itself became the object, a form of worship—the use of the mind supposedly in imitation of God. For generations to come, the Talmud itself would be analyzed by this same method. The result? Historian Cecil Roth writes: "The Talmud . . . gave [Jews] the characteristic imprint which distinguished them from others, as well as their remarkable power of resistance and cohesion. Its dialectic sharpened their wits, and conferred upon them . . . mental acuteness. . . . The Talmud gave the persecuted Jew of the Middle Ages another world into which he could escape . . . It gave him a fatherland, which he could carry about with him when his own land was lost."

By teaching others the thinking of the rabbis, the Talmud certainly has had power. But the question for all—Jews and non-Jews alike—is this, Does the Talmud truly reflect the mind of God?—1 Corinthians 2:11-16.



Fine Conduct Brings Praise

THE Italian newspaper *La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno* commended Jehovah's Witnesses for publishing the article "Matera—City of Unique Cave Dwellings." This article appeared in the July 8, 1997, issue of *Awake!* magazine, which had an extensive circulation in many languages. *Awake!* is currently being translated into 81 languages and has a circulation of over 19 million copies worldwide. The newspaper commented that *Awake!* set the summer's record "when it comes to advertising campaigns to promote the historic and artistic heritage of the city [of Matera]."

The newspaper praised the Witnesses in connection with the "Faith in God's Word" District Convention held in Matera in 1997. The article not-

ed that the Witnesses managed "to get 4,000 people to the [city's] XXI Settembre Stadium in the middle of summer and under the scorching sun; they have taken care of the cleanup, repainting, and basic upgrading of this sports center (particularly the toilet facilities) completely free of charge, meeting the expense for the purchase of necessary materials themselves."

Jehovah's Witnesses strive to be good neighbors. (Matthew 22:37-39) They also follow the Scriptural admonition: "Maintain your conduct fine among the nations, that . . . they may as a result of your fine works of which they are eyewitnesses glorify God in the day for his inspection." —1 Peter 2:12.