

JESUS BRINGS

FREEDOM

TO THE CAPTIVES



*"... to proclaim
freedom to the captives ..."*
(Luke 4:18).

Constantine D. Lenis



About the cover

The cover illustration with the four faces of eagles portrays one of the prophetic dreams the author received from the Spirit of God; it is fully explained in Chapter Six, page 118.

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2. **If** you are a member of the body of Christ and you agree with the message of freedom which I proclaim in this book, **if** you can translate it into another language and the Lord God will put it into your heart to do so, and **if** you, like me, wish to **lift up the banner of freedom which the Lord brings to all those who follow Him**, there will be no money involved. This book is written for the glory of the Lord Jesus and for the God-given freedom of our brothers and sisters who are trapped in the dark ruins of “religion” --- not for financial benefit. I do this work for free and whoever wishes to have a part in this ministry must do the same. I also wrote this book in the Greek language.

3.

Note from the Author

When I began to write this book, I had the following fantastic dream:

Before me, I saw Adam and the Lord standing behind him. In front of them, suspended in the air, was a rotating fiery sword.

“Costa!” the Lord called my name.

“Yes, Lord!” I replied.

“Do you think that the promise of hope which was given to Adam was given in vain?” asked the Lord.

Immediately, the words of Genesis 3:15 came into my mind.

“No, Lord!” I answered. “The promise of hope which was given to Adam was not given in vain. The **Seed** came. Jesus was that **Seed**.”

“Very well!” said the Lord, “Then catch the sword!”

Instantly, the rotating sword flew into the air and came towards me. I raised my hand to catch it, but, at the last moment, I thought that the fiery sword might burn my hand and I let it fly over my head. I kept my eyes on it as it flew

behind me. Suddenly, I saw Abraham. He raised his hand and caught the sword.

The dream continued with other details, but up to this point, it reminded me of the greatest hope ever given to mankind. When Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, they enjoyed a beautiful personal relationship with their Creator. Being in the Garden was as if they were in God's presence. Unfortunately, after the fall, God sent them away from the Garden and placed a rotating fiery sword at the entrance of the Garden to prevent them from returning (Genesis 3:24). Ever since, all the descendants of Adam were alienated from God because of sin and came under Satan's control (Acts 26:18). The only hope for mankind to break away from Satan's power, to reconcile with God, and to enjoy a personal relationship with Him again, was the coming of the promised Seed.

Both the Bible and the foregoing dream made a strong statement: I was not the one to remove the sword. I could not even touch it! This matter had been settled thousands of years before my time. The one who received God's promise that in his seed all the tribes of the earth will be blessed was Abraham (Genesis 22:18). Jesus, Abraham's Seed, was the only One who had the power to remove the obstacle and to reopen the way that leads to God's presence. In fact, He became the Way that leads to God and He declared that no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6).

The word "religion" means "to bind back" (with God). Long before the coming of Jesus, alienated mankind attempted to reunite with God through religion. But their attempts were futile because religion did not have the power to remove sin and to bind mankind back with God. The

One who has made this possible by the blood of His cross is the Lord Jesus (Colossians 1:20).

As religion is “another way” by which mankind still attempts to reconcile with God, those who have willingly accepted the Lordship of Jesus in their lives, should separate themselves from it. Being involved with and practicing religion instead of having a personal relationship with God through Jesus, or trying to have both, constitutes an insult to the One who said, **“I am the Way”!**

Religion is one of the greatest strongholds that Satan is using in order to mislead the followers of Christ and to harm their personal relationship with God. Any religious stronghold, whether it is a man or a religious institution, that tries to stand in this special place of Jesus, is an abomination in the eyes of the Lord God because it oppresses Christian freedom and harms the personal relationship that should exist between the Body and its Head (2 Corinthians 10:4; Colossians 1:8).

The apostle Paul said that the Christians pull down every stronghold and bring every thought captive to Jesus (2 Corinthians 10:4,5). In this book, I have done just that. I have presented the subject in a parable-like manner as the Holy Spirit taught me, and I have made some strong statements which shock the religious mind. For this reason, the subject of this book could be highly controversial, and it might offend some religious people. However, this offence may help them focus on Jesus who deserves their attention, devotion, and praise (Revelation 2:14; 2 Peter 3:18).

My position is that the true Church of the Lord Jesus is not a religious institution. I believe that the Church of Jesus

consists of all those who believe in Him and in whom the Holy Spirit dwells — the born-again (John 3:3-8; Romans 8:9).

Also, I maintain that Jesus has placed in His Church apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. The persons who hold these positions of service in the Church are God's gifts to the Church (Ephesians 4:8,11; Appendix D).

The negative statements I make in this book are not directed against the Christian Church or against the gifts that God has placed in it. They are directed against the cults, the false "Christian" institutions which pose as the Church displaying counterfeit apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers. I am against these cults because they mislead and hold some of the true believers in Christ captive within their religious walls. If the Holy Spirit convinces you that some of these statements apply to you or to the group with whom you fellowship, please do not be offended. Instead, analyze the situation prayerfully and fairly, and if you are moved by the Holy Spirit, repent before the Lord God and change your ways for the glory of Jesus.

God bless you!

The Author

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*Dedicated to the Lord Jesus, the Great Deliverer, Who,
through the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth,
led me to freedom.*

“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom to the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD’S favor...”

Prophet Isaiah, (chapter 61:1,2 -- NIV)

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Jesus reading from the book of Isaiah
(Luke 4:18,19)

“But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”

(Hebrews 5:14 --- NIV)

“I am amazed by the fact that religious fear, which thrives upon the ignorance of God’s Word, can manipulate minds and turn free humans into captives.”

Gus Lenis, page 108

Prologue

Many books have been written to bring glory to the God of Heaven and to help others find the Truth. Some authors based their writings on the knowledge they received from various organizations, others on their personal understanding of the Bible, and others, like me, were moved to write because of the personal, supernatural experiences they had with the Lord.

From the time I became a man of God, I've had many spiritual experiences. I've had the pleasure of experiencing the love and grace of our Heavenly Father, encountering the Lord Jesus, and being guided by the Holy Spirit towards the pure and true worship. At the same time, the Holy Spirit helped me to identify and to avoid the traps Satan sets before us and taught me that **FREEDOM** is the most precious thing in life.

The Lord Jesus put much emphasis on freedom. On a Sabbath day, when Jesus was in the synagogue in Nazareth, He opened the scroll of the prophet Isaiah and read out loud the following words:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor (Luke 4:18,19 -- NIV)

What kind of freedom did the Lord proclaim? His was not

the kind of freedom the people of Israel were expecting. They were expecting the coming of the Messiah to free them from the bondage of the Roman Empire. But from the Lord's work, before His death and after His resurrection, and from the work which He commissioned His disciples to do, we see that the freedom about which He preached was not something that could be gained by the sword because it was freedom of the spirit and of the soul of man. It was a deliverance from sin which was ruling mankind, deliverance from the power of death, deliverance from religious bondage, caused by the oppression, the fears, and the spiritual darkness into which "religion" has cast mankind. It was the kind of freedom He wanted His people to enjoy --- all those who are brokenhearted because of the "religious" hypocrisy that surrounds us. This was the kind of freedom He also gave me.

In this book I reveal:

- a) How I was enslaved in a false religious organization when I was young; the admiration I had for my religion; and how the God of the spirits of men delivered me.
- b) The emotional turmoil I experienced when the "elders" of my religion judged me and pronounced me a heretic, a rebel, and an apostate.
- c) The hypocrisy of my "spiritual" brothers which I fully experienced.
- d) Some of the spiritual help, rest, and ministry the Lord gave me for His glory.

I did not write this book with the intention of gaining “glory” or “fame” for myself. I have never pursued the glory of men. I proved this fact by taking a stand for the Lord before my “spiritual” brothers, although I knew that they would disfellowship me, slander my name, and treat me like one of the “evil slave class” as they call the ex-members who have disagreed with their doctrines. Perhaps my determination to take a stand for the Lord Jesus was formed during the early years of my life, as I will explain in the next two chapters.

Neither did I write this book because of “pride”. If my motive were “pride”, I would not have written a book in which I describe, in all honesty and in great detail, some of the supernatural experiences I received from the Spirit of Christ who dwells in me, although I know that the unbelievers and the skeptics will call me “crazy” or “demonic”.

I wrote this book to:

- a) Bear testimony that the Lord is alive.
- b) Testify that the Spirit of Prophecy is active today.
- c) Strengthen the faith of and encourage those who believe in Him.
- d) Reveal the greatest “trap” of all ages which Satan has set to enslave people, as it was revealed to me by the Lord. I’m referring to the “trap” which is exceedingly loved by men, and for which they work harder than they work for God; it is the “trap” over which humans have hated and killed one another.

e) Turn the hopes of the readers to the One who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.

The events I have related in this book are true. However, I have changed the names of people so that I will not insult the innocent.

Chapter One

Memories

a) The beginning of my life

I am the third and youngest child of Dimitrios and Helen Lenis who lived on the beautiful Island of Salamina, near Athens, Greece, where I was born. My parents' first child was a son and the second was a daughter.

After my sister was born, my parents made up their minds not to have another child. But nine years later, I was conceived. Because my mother did not want to have another baby, she became very sad and decided to have an abortion. My mother did everything she could to have me aborted such as jumping up and down, hitting her belly with stones, and other such procedures, but none were successful. In the end, she went to our family doctor who had considerable experience in this area and asked him to have the abortion. He agreed to do it.

When my mother lay down on the operating table, and the doctor got ready to "murder" me, he was suddenly overpowered with terror. He was completely unable to perform the operation and sent my mother home.

A few days later, my mother, still determined to have the abortion, visited the doctor once more. Again, as he was about to commence the operation, he was gripped by an

inexplicable terror so that he was unable to operate. Shaking, the doctor sent my mother home for a second time.

Later, my mother visited him for a third time, and the same phenomenal event happened. The doctor explained to my mother that on all three occasions he was over-powered by terror, and an invisible hand held him back from performing the abortion.

When my mother returned home after her third appointment with the doctor, she received a phone call from my father. He was a marine officer who sailed to many ports in the Mediterranean. Speaking from a distant port, my father told my mother to listen carefully to his words. She must not abort the baby. He said that he had had a dream during which he was told that “this child must live because God has a purpose for him”. Consequently, all plans for the abortion were cancelled. At that time, my parents were part of the so-called Jehovah’s Witnesses; therefore, I was born a “Witness of Jehovah”.

I heard the foregoing story when I was about ten years old. My mother and I went out for a walk. As we were strolling, we noticed our family doctor sitting on a chair outside a neighborhood grocery store. He stared at us above his lowered eyeglasses and, with his hand, beckoned us to join him. When we met, he looked straight into my eyes and said:

“You must call **me** your father.”

“Why?” I asked.

“Because the lady who is standing next to you wanted to abort you, but I did not let her do it,” he responded.

On the way home, my mother told me the whole story. To this day, I believe that it was not the family doctor who did not allow my mother to abort me but God --- the One who knows man even before He forms him in his mother’s womb (Jeremiah 1:5; Galatians 1:15). Let His name be praised now and forever!

b) The baptism

When I was a young child, a kind lady in our neighborhood who was a friend of the family, asked my parents to allow her to take me out for a little walk, and they agreed. The lady took me immediately from my house to the Greek Orthodox temple of Agios Minas, and there she had me baptized as a Greek Orthodox. Everything had been prepared before-hand for my “baptism”. The lady and the priest of the Greek Orthodox Church had made a private agreement to take me away from my parents and baptize me secretly.

After the ceremony, the lady returned me to my parents and said to my mother, “Helen, long live the child! Today, I baptized him in the temple of Agios Minas!” My mother replied, “Well, thank you, for giving my son a bath.”

c) Experiencing persecution

Until I was six or seven, my parents took me with them to their religious meetings. During this period of my life, I did not have any religious knowledge, because no one ever spent any time with me to teach me anything. The only events I recall from this period are when some of the kids on the island threw stones at me in an attempt to injure me. I remember the hatred which was evident on their faces as

they called out, “Jehovist, Jehovist”. I never revealed to anyone the pain in my heart.

When I was about seven years old, my parents left the organization of Jehovah’s Witnesses for personal reasons. For the next seven years, I had the chance to learn about the Greek Orthodox faith through the school, Church attendance, and the catechism.

d) The dream about the throne

When I was approximately ten years old, I had the following dream:

“I was standing by the seashore looking southwards at the sea. The sun was shining in the blue sky. Suddenly, a gigantic throne appeared in front of me. The seat of the throne was highly elevated. I was moved to approach it. When I neared it, I knelt and crawled beneath the seat of the throne. As soon as I entered the space beneath the throne, I saw, coming down from heaven, a white, exquisitely fine, silky veil which enveloped the huge throne and me. The golden rays of the sun gave the white veil a golden appearance. The golden reflection of the veil filled the heaven and the earth.”

This dream has remained implanted in my mind to this day.

e) Electrocuted

One day, when I was thirteen years old, I came home from school and went to the kitchen to wash my hands.

As soon as I touched the faucet, everything about me turned black. I felt my hand beating rapidly on the faucet as if it were palpating on a soft pillow. I did not feel any

pain. Within me, I heard myself saying peacefully: “Jehovah, I’m coming!”

The cause of this confusion was soon explained. The insulation on one of the electric wires in the house had worn down and the bare wire was touching a metal pipe. A piece of haywire was attached to this pipe, and its other end was tied up on the water pipe which supplied the water to the kitchen. All these pipes were electrified with 220 volts.

My father had noticed that the needle in the electric meter of the house was turning around very rapidly and realized that there was a short in the wires. Immediately, he called an electrician to come to the house. When I returned home from school, I saw the electrician, standing on a chair, looking at the fuse box. I greeted him and then went into the kitchen.

Suddenly, the electrician heard loud screams coming from the kitchen. As he did not know what was causing me to yell, he undid the main. He did this at exactly the right moment; my mother, who also heard me yelling, had come to the kitchen to find out what had happened to me. Not realizing that I was stuck to the faucet and unable to move, she was about to touch me with her hands. At that precise moment, the electrician undid the main fuse, and I fell, thankfully, into my mother’s arms.

The strange thing is that not only did I feel no pain, but neither did I hear myself screaming. For me, the whole occurrence lasted for a moment, and everything was peaceful and serene. The only reality I felt during this incident was my inner voice saying: “Jehovah, I’m coming!”

This is one experience I shall always recall vividly. It proved to me that man has a soul, (“Nephesh” in Hebrew), which is conscious and which, at death, leaves one’s body and goes to the Lord (1 Kings 17:21,22; 2 Cor. 5:6,8).

f) The dream about Michael

It was a hot summer night in Greece. Because of the heat, my mother had prepared my bed out in the yard.

The elements of nature were in perfect harmony that night. The stars, like little bright eyes, were twinkling in the sky as if they were greeting me. The Lady Moon, graceful and full of pride, was sending her silver light down to the dark Earth.

What beauty and harmony! What a wonderful testament of the Creator’s glory! What a glorious testament of His wisdom and power!

As I contemplated my surroundings, these thoughts came to me: “I would like to know Him so much, to learn who He is, and to give Him a simple ‘**thanks**’ because He brought me into this life and gave me the pleasure to see and adore His exquisite artwork, spread out above me.”

My soul opened that night in full awe and joy. My heart was filled with love for this God, unknown to me yet. My desire to give Him thanks moved me to kneel on my bed. It was perhaps the first time in my life that I prayed with such openness and sincerity. I was fourteen years old.

With simple words which were pouring from my heart, I thanked Him. I begged Him to allow me to know Him, and to somehow come in contact with Him. I asked Him to give

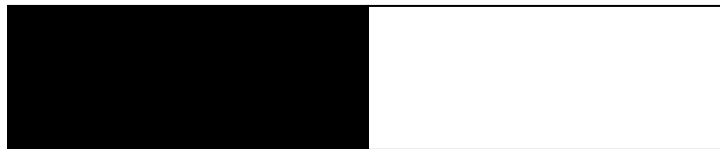
me wisdom and to show me the way which I should follow in my life to accord with His purpose for me. I asked Him to show me how I might serve Him! He answered me that same night with the following dream:

“I was in a bar-like setting. Many men and women filled the place. They were wearing their best clothes which were black. Everyone was dancing, laughing, and having a good time. Over their heads, a small light bulb was suspended giving out a faint yellowish light.

I did not know any of these people --- none of them. They surrounded me. I pushed them aside to escape. I knew I was looking for someone. But whom?

The moment I managed to gain my freedom, I had my answer. I looked straight ahead, and I saw a person standing a short distance away. He was a strong, stinky, young man with brownish blonde hair and a somewhat reddish face. He was wearing a long, white robe. I cried out in a loud voice filled with joy: Michael! I’ve found you!’

Michael took me aside, well away from the crowd. On a piece of paper, he drew two rectangles. He shaded one black and left the other one white. The one symbolized the darkness, the other, the light.”



With this dream, I understood that in my lifetime, God would show me, make me experience, the darkness, and the light! Now, as I look back, I realize that I first had to experience the darkness in order to appreciate the light.

I thank the Lord for appointing Michael to stand for the sons of His people. I thank the Lord for appointing His angels to help those who will receive salvation (Daniel 12:1; Hebrews 1:14).

Chapter Two

The captivity

A few days after I had the vision about 'light and darkness', my parents decided to rejoin the Jehovah's Witnesses. At first, I did not want to follow them to their religious meetings. But one night, I walked with my mother to the "Kingdom Hall", as the Witnesses call their place of gathering.

When we arrived, the meeting had already begun. I looked up at the platform. There, I saw a young man explaining the things of the kingdom of God. When I looked closely at the speaker, I could not believe my eyes. This young man was the exact image of Michael, who had appeared in my dream!

Immediately, I realized that the dream I'd had about light and darkness would begin to unfold. I knew that I was about to enter a special period in my life through which I would experience either the light or the darkness. But which? Only time would tell. Being fourteen years old, I could not judge. Therefore, I felt I should remain in the religion into which I was born, believing that this decision would please God.

I kept this dream at the back of my mind and I began to

fellowship with the Witnesses. I became especially attached to the young man. I believed that through him, I would learn the ways of God and His plans for me.

One of the first things I learned from the Witnesses was the sacred name of the true God **YHWH**, as it is found in the Hebrew Old Testament, and which, my Greek schooling and the Greek Orthodox Church had failed to reveal to me.

The name **YHWH** is known as the “Tetragrammaton”. Since it does not contain any vowels, we do not know how to pronounce it. Many people pronounce it “**YAH-VEH**”. Others have placed three of the vowels (**a, o, a**) of the Hebrew word for “Lord” (ADONAI) between the consonants **YHWH**, **Y a H o W a H**, and pronounce it “Yahovah” or “Jehovah”.

This name sounded like sweet music when I heard it for the first time. I was completely overwhelmed. “At last,” I thought, “I have learned the name of the unknown God, the One to whom I had prayed. Now, I knew that this God had a personal name: ‘Yahweh’! He is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The Great God of Israel became my God!”

I felt such tremendous joy when I saw that name in Exodus 6:2,3. There, it says:

“And God spoke to Moses and said to him, I am Jehovah. And I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, and by My name JEHOVAH I never made myself known to them.”

I also learned that Jesus showed that the name of God was

very important, because, during His preaching, He revealed it to men. Once, when He prayed to His Father, He said:

“I revealed Your name to the men whom You gave to Me out of the world. They were Yours, and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word” (John 17:6).

Later, He said:

“Righteous Father, indeed the world did not know You, but I know You, and these have known that You sent Me. And I have made Your name known to them, and will make it known, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” (John 17:25, 26).

The prophet Joel also explained the importance of God’s name when he said,

“... all who shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be saved” (chapter 2:32).

In Romans 10:13 the apostle Paul repeated the words of Joel and then, he asked:

“How then may they call on One in whom they have not believed? And how may they believe One of whom they have not heard? And how may they hear without preaching? And how may they preach if they are not sent?” (Romans 10:14-15).

The Witnesses apply these verses to the person of God the Father.

The knowledge of the name of God brought me great joy. “Certainly,” I thought. “I am with the people of God. It is not only the Bible, but also every encyclopedia, that states that this indeed is the sacred name of the true God”. In my teenage mind, I thought that because the Greek Orthodox Church members persecuted us, and showed no respect for the sacred name of God by calling us “Jehovahs”, proved that:

- a) They did not know the name of God.
- b) They did not know that Jehovah is One.
- c) Since they persecuted us for the name of God, we must be the only true Christians, because from the beginning of their existence the Christians suffered persecution from the unbelievers. True Christians never persecuted anyone!

My knowledge did not stop here. I was like a tender plant thirsting for water. I longed to drink from the “*water*” of the truth. Jesus talked about this different kind of “*water*” when He spoke to the woman from Samaria. He said:

“but whoever may drink of the water which I will give him will never ever thirst, but the water which I will give to him will become a fountain of water in him, springing up into everlasting life.” (John 4:14).

The Witnesses taught me that this “*water*” is actually the “**knowledge**” which Christ gives their organization, and which it, in turn, passes onto us. At that time, I did not know that the “*water*” about which Jesus spoke, did not represent “**knowledge**”, but **the Holy Spirit**, the Comforter, who indwells those who believe in the True Jesus of the

Bible who, according to the apostles, is our great God and Savior (John 7:37-39; Titus 2:13).

“Certainly”, I thought, “the organization of the Witnesses is the organization of God. In it, I will be able to serve Him.” Thus, I began to trust this organization in all things they were teaching me. Whatever they printed in their books and magazines was the light of the truth which God was sending to men. For me, and all the Witnesses I knew, our organization was the “mouth” of God. I strongly believed that the Jehovah’s Witnesses had been sent by God to teach His ways to mankind.

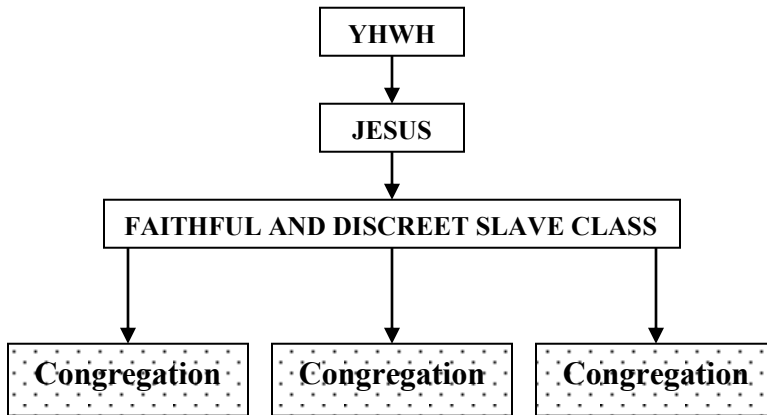
The Witnesses taught me to believe that we are living in the last days of “this system of things”, which to them means “near the end of the world”. They turned my attention to the twenty-fourth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew, where, as they told me, Matthew describes the signs of the end. They especially drew my attention to verses 45 and 46, where Matthew writes the following about the “faithful and discreet servant”. There it says,

“Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom his lord has set over his household, to give to them the food in season? Blessed is that servant whom his lord shall find so doing when he comes.”

“Today”, the Witnesses told me, “since we are living in the last days, according to the above verses, God must have on the earth a class of people whom he has appointed to give spiritual food to His servants”. They told me that the Lord calls this class, “the faithful and discreet servant”. Then, they asked me: “Do you doubt that this “class” exists **only** in our organization? Look how the Witnesses preach the

name of the true God Jehovah throughout the entire earth, and how the other religious denominations hate us for doing so.”

When I was fourteen years old, I did not have enough knowledge to judge the veracity of these statements, nor any reason to question their teachings. I came to believe that the following chart, which showed the path which the spiritual food followed in order to reach me, was correct. It certainly looked very impressive and believable:



They told me that the “light of the truth” comes from Jehovah, who gives it to Jesus, who gives it to the “Faithful and Discreet Slave Class”, which, through the publications of the Watchtower Society, give it to their congregations and, in this way, to me.

Time flew by, and as the years passed, I became fanatically attached to our “Holy Organization”, as many of the Witnesses called it. In my prayers, I (like many Witnesses), prayed to our Heavenly Father to protect and bless our

“Mother Organization”. And as I was led to believe that the “Mother Organization” belonged to the Lord, **I committed my life into her hands for her to lead me wherever “she” wanted.**

With all my heart, I believed that all those who were not part of “her”, would soon be destroyed forever by the hand of God, while we, the Jehovah’s Witnesses, and **only** we, would inherit the earth and everlasting life.

They brought me to the point of believing that outside of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, there is no security or salvation. Therefore, I believed them when they taught that our organization was the modern-day, “Noah’s ark”!

With great zeal, I preached the “good news” from house to house to encourage others to join our organization to be saved.

They trained me to faithfully obey, without any complaints, all the laws and rules which the “class” of the faithful and discreet servant passed down to us.

Eventually, I was led to believe that **obedience to the men who made up the Governing Body of the publishing house, “The Watchtower”, meant obedience to God!!!**

In this manner, little by little, my captivity was completely secured!

Chapter Three

My Life as a Witness of Jehovah

a) In Greece

Oh! I was so happy! I was fourteen years old and I was serving the true God! What a blessing! It was so wonderful to be among the people of God. The love and the smiles of my spiritual brothers made it a pleasure for me to belong to such an organization.

I really wanted to learn more about God, and for this reason I made sure never to miss a meeting.

We had five meetings each week. Some of them were held at the “Kingdom Hall” and some in private houses. When I was on my way to these meetings, I felt as if I were on my way to school. When we were gathered, we studied the publications of the “Watchtower” Society.

The study of their books and magazines consisted of a series of questions and answers. At the bottom of each page we studied, there were questions based on the text of that page. The study conductor read each question out loud and then looked around the group to find someone who could answer his question. Just as in school, the students who wished to answer raised a hand. The study conductor called those who wanted to give the answer by name; he tried to

be fair, and to give everyone an equal opportunity to be heard.

The Witnesses tried not to go unprepared to these meetings. Before each gathering, the Witnesses studied the relevant books and magazines to give the correct answers when questioned. A person who did not frequently raise his or her hand to answer the questions, was considered to be “unprepared”, or “immature”. The more “mature” Witnesses tried to help the “immature” ones to prepare themselves in advance so they could participate more often.

One of our meetings was called “Theocratic ministry school”. Its purpose was to train us in the following:

- a) How to approach people when we go from house to house.
- b) How to present our message to them.
- c) How to overcome their objections.
- d) What scriptures to use in each case.
- e) How to become better speakers and readers.

To become better speakers, they gave each of us an opportunity to go onto the platform and give a short talk before the congregation. While the speaker spoke, a rater, who was appointed by the Watchtower Society, and who was called the “Theocratic ministry school servant”, rated each speaker. A good rating depended on a speaker’s presentation of his subject matter, i.e., whether during his or her speech, eye contact was maintained with the audience;

whether or not the speaker used gestures to express or emphasize an idea or emotion; whether or not the volume of the speaker's voice fluctuated in order to overcome various temporary noises, such as a baby crying, etc.

These activities were very satisfying to me and made me extremely happy. But that was not all. Everyone was required to take part in the preaching work --- everyone had to participate! It was a basic obligation for all of us to bring the "good news of the kingdom" to those who were not Witnesses.

In Greece in the 1960's, our preaching work included house to house visits, and the selling of books and magazines produced by the "Watchtower" Society.

I was happy to go from house to house to proclaim the Kingdom of God to everyone. Often, I was paired with another Witness when I did this work, but sometimes I went out alone to preach.

I did most of my preaching work on the island where I was born --- the island of Salamina. Sometimes, I rode my bike and took the ferry to the mainland where I preached in the vicinity of Megalo Pefko and Megara.

During my preaching work, I had many experiences. One day, I paired with a boy who was about two years younger than me. I was then about sixteen years old. We rode our bikes, took the ferry, and went to the outskirts of Megalo Pefko and Megara.

As we preached from house to house, we met a man who came out onto the street, pointing at us and yelling in a loud

voice. His confused screams perplexed us but attracted the attention of passersby who stopped and surrounded us. Soon there was a fairly large crowd.

Some people in the crowd began asking us many questions, which we answered from the Bible as best as we could.

It did not take long before the crowd was divided into two groups. Some called us unprintable names, while others defended us. But shortly after, we did not have to say anything, because the two groups ignored us and began loudly arguing amongst themselves. Their arguing caused great commotion.

Suddenly, someone cried out loudly over the noise and tumult:

“Look! The priest is coming down here! Now you’ll see what’s going to happen!”

Everyone turned to see the priest. (The priest has a great deal of authority and respect in a Greek Orthodox Community). Suddenly, everyone became deadly silent. I realized immediately that this was my opportunity to preach about the coming Kingdom of God.

When the priest approached us, he lifted his head and looked at me. Our eyes met for a moment. He saw me holding a Bible, which I had just raised above my head. He heard me preaching with a loud voice. However, he did not stay to talk to us! He lowered his head again and continued his way to a corner store which was about half a block down the road.

The crowd was totally surprised. They had expected the priest to stop to give a short sermon, and to put us all in our place. But he didn't. Now that he was out of the way, the arguing amongst the crowd began again where they had left off before the interruption. An older man who was defending us shouted, "See? The priest is a coward! He avoided speaking to these boys because he knows they are in the right!"

As the arguing came to a climax, the priest walked from the store holding two shopping bags. He walked towards us again. When he came near, someone in the crowd called out:

"Excuse me, Papa (Greek for "Priest"), come and listen to what these boys are saying!"

They made way for the priest to enter the circle. He walked in and stood in front of me. He was so tall and big! I felt so small before him, yet I felt secure in his presence. I raised my head and looked at his eyes. I smiled.

"What are you doing here?" he asked.

"I'm preaching God's Kingdom!" I answered.

He looked at the surrounding crowd, then back at me.

"Would you like to come to my house so we can talk?" he asked.

I realized that he did not want to talk in front of all those people.

"We could!" I replied.

We followed him to his house. After we were introduced to his wife, she became upset. She felt ashamed that her husband had brought two “Jehovists” to her home. He asked her to give us a treat!

We sat in the yard. The priest’s wife brought us something to drink.

“Tell me,” the priest asked, “where did you find this name ‘Jehovah’? Why do you give that name to God?”

I was really surprised because it had not occurred to me that I would be asked such a simple question. I started to explain to him about God’s sacred name as it is found in the Scriptures. I opened my Bible to Exodus 6:3. I handed my Bible over to him and I asked him to read it for himself. He looked really surprised when he read from that scripture that God’s name is “Jehovah”.

Then, I explained to him that whether we are Jehovah’s Witnesses, or Greek Orthodox, or whether we belong to one of the many Christian denominations, or to Judaism, whether we realize it or not, we are praising the name of Jehovah. We are doing so by using in our hymns the word “Hallelujah”. I explained to him that the word “**Hallelujah**” is a Hebrew word made from two words which mean, “**PRAISE JAH**” or “**YAH**” and that “**JAH**” or “**YAW**” is the shortened form of “**YHWH**”.

The priest thanked me for this useful piece of information. Throughout our visit he was very polite. His wife, on the other hand, was sour and always upset.

Shortly before we left his house, I noticed a lady walking into the yard; I recognized her as one of the noisy, arguing crowds. As soon as the priest saw her, he changed his atti-

tude towards us. From being very polite, he became very sarcastic.

We left with many disturbing thoughts in our minds. Why so much ignorance? Why so much hypocrisy? Why all this arguing? “Certainly,” I thought, “we are in the truth.” And I thanked God for the honor He gave me by allowing me to become a member of His Holy Organization.

The Society had given us certain goals which we were required to meet. Our achievements were reported on the “report cards”, supplied by the organization. One goal, for instance, comprised the number of hours we had to preach. Each person had to preach for a minimum of ten hours each month. If, for some reason, we could not reach this goal, the more “mature” brothers would try to help us make it. However, if month after month a person was unable to reach this goal, he would be considered “**weak**” or “**immature**”.

When a person exceeded the above goal, he was considered to be “**mature**”. He was also demonstrating that he really loved God and His Kingdom more than did the “**immatures**” or “**weak**”. The “**mature**” person was also loved and respected more by the rest of the Witnesses; moreover, in the case of a promotion in the congregation, the “**mature**” candidate was preferred.

From time to time, I served as a “**pioneer**”. A pioneer’s goal was to preach one hundred hours each month. The work of preaching always made me happy as it gave me the opportunity to present the true God to many people.

As a pioneer, I once travelled to a place named Kalabaka, near the world famous Meteora. There, I preached to the surrounding villages. My heart was filled with love for my fellow countrymen. There, I spent a few days of great spiritual happiness. There, I really felt that we were bringing “light” to a world which did not know its Creator nor His Holy Organization (as I then thought) through which He was bestowing this wonderful “light”. I felt so exceedingly blessed from God, because He was giving me the honor to be part of His people.

b) In Canada

When I turned eighteen, I left my home island, Salamina, and immigrated to Vancouver, Canada. On the ship to Canada, the Lord spoke to me in a dream. He told me it was His will for me to remain in the organization. He told me that one day I would use the things I would learn there. I felt honored, because I thought that God would use me to bring many people into His organization **for salvation**.

When I was nineteen years old, I married Efrossyni, a wonderful girl from Greece, and a good Witness who had belonged to the same congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Salamina as I.

At that time, there was no Greek congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Vancouver. Therefore, my wife and I served the Lord (?) in the English-speaking congregations. In a short time, we realized that there were thousands of Greeks in Vancouver, whom our Canadian brothers could not “help” because they could not speak Greek. As I thought about that fact, I was inspired by a wonderful idea. How could I help my compatriots? I realized that I, by myself,

could not visit the homes of the thousands of Greeks in Vancouver. What could I do?

In no time at all, a few Greek Witnesses moved to Vancouver from other parts of Canada. What joy! “Now,” I thought, “if we all get organized, I might see the fulfillment of my great desire --- to help my fellow countrymen!”

I talked to all the newcomers and told them about the idea which was burning within me. A few showed some interest, but some of them needed greater help than my compatriots; they had such overpowering personal differences that one group did not want to speak to the other group. The differences were deep-seated and irreconcilable.

How could we possibly get organized when there existed such hatred within our own potential ranks? Where was our own Christian love so that we could preach to others about the God of Love? Where was the Christian love that “... has patience, is kind ... does not behave indecently, does not pursue its own things, is not easily provoked, thinks no evil, quietly covers all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things”? (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). It appeared to be non-existent among us. (By the way, as Jehovah’s Witnesses, we believed that we were the only true Christians on earth. Therefore, expressions such as “Christian love”, “Christian brothers”, etc., were common among us.)

Meanwhile, I had become good friends with Thomas, who was a Canadian Witness. He loved God very much. He and I decided to visit our Greek brothers to try to help them get along with each other and to love one another so that we could unite to do the work of the Lord.

Our attempts proved to be difficult, frustrating, and tiring. It was hard for me to believe that I was dealing with people who claimed they had devoted their lives to God, and yet, appeared to have no Christian love whatsoever. I believed that love was one of the main characteristics of a true Christian. How could we demonstrate that we were **the only** true Christians, if this essential love did not exist among us?

Those who governed the congregations of the Jehovah's Witnesses were called "servants". The principal and responsible person in each congregation was named "congregational servant". A person who had more authority than he, was entitled "circuit servant". A "circuit servant" had authority over a certain number of congregations in his circuit. A person who had jurisdiction over the "circuit servant" was named "district servant". A "district servant" was responsible for a certain number of circuits.

One day, our "district servant" visited the Canadian congregation which I was attending. I spoke to him, with all my zeal, about the fire which was burning inside me. I asked, "Would you please give me permission to start a weekly meeting, in the Greek language, at any Kingdom Hall in Vancouver?" He did! My heart jumped for joy. It did not take me long to spread the good news to the rest of the Witnesses. Everyone seemed to be happy.

The day of our first meeting arrived. My heart was filled with a mixture of delight and suspense. I turned the key to the large door of the Kingdom Hall and slowly opened it. Once I was inside, bothersome questions filled my mind. I thought, "I wonder if everyone will come? Did my words touch their hearts? Had the genuine Christian love entered

their hearts? Would this love be powerful enough to rid them of personal disagreements and hatred they bore one another? Had they opened the door of their hearts to the One who says: ***“I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go into him, and I will dine with him, and he with me.”*** (Revelation 3:19,20)

Four people showed up --- including my wife and me. The other couple had been Jehovah’s Witnesses for many years. They read the disappointment on my face, and, with love, they attempted to give encouragement: “Don’t worry, brother,” they said, “eventually they will come. Love will bother their conscience and, in time, they will join us.” Because of their kind, heartening words, the feelings of disappointment and hopelessness left my heart.

The following Sunday, I was happy to see that our group of four had become five. We joked amongst ourselves; this was a 20% increase! This gratifying increase continued steadily in the weeks that followed --- eight, fourteen, eighteen, twenty- one. I gave thanks to the Lord daily. I felt glad that I had not worked in vain. We had had such a small start, and yet we became a good-sized congregation. All our meetings were conducted in Greek. In two years, as more Greek Witnesses moved to Vancouver from other parts of Canada, and as we proselytized some other Greeks from Vancouver, our congregation grew to eighty-two. Our preaching work was directed exclusively to the Greek population of Vancouver.

When our congregation was formed, the Society placed me among the body of “servants”. They appointed me to be

one of the three members of the committee. At this time, I was twenty-one years old.

I was overwhelmed by my many responsibilities. These included my family (I had married at nineteen and became a father when I was twenty), the congregation, and my secular work. But I did not complain. I knew that many people needed help, and I was glad to offer it. After all, I had found what I had been seeking --- the service of the Lord.

To give you an idea of the help I provided to others, and (I say this with all humility) the self-sacrifice I made at this time, let me tell you the following true story:

There was a businessman who showed interest in our preaching. He wished to study the Bible with us, but he had a problem. His store was open until midnight. Could anyone come to his house after midnight to study the Bible? Nobody! But this person and his family required help, and someone had to make a sacrifice. I volunteered. Therefore, I took my wife and our baby and visited them at midnight. Many nights we studied the Bible until two o'clock in the morning, in the heart of winter; when we left to go home, there was often ice and sometimes snow on the ground.

The whole family believed in Jehovah and became Jehovah's Witnesses. It was a great joy for me to see my work producing "fruitage" for the Lord. Would the winter hold me back? Would the snow or the ice slow me down? The joy I obtained from serving the Lord, as I thought, overcame all adversities.

My service was rewarded when I received an invitation to go to "Bethel". This is the name of the headquarters of the

Jehovah's Witnesses. The Canadian Bethel is in Toronto, Ontario. I was invited to attend a two-week training session on organizational policies. I naturally accepted the invitation, because it was such an honor. I was twenty-two years old.

When I returned to Vancouver, I was even more of a fanatic for the organization than I had been previously. Although I could see the foolishness behind a few doctrinal points they taught us, such as, "Those who do not know how to read will not inherit God's Kingdom", etc., I overlooked them. I was overwhelmed by the order and discipline I experienced in Bethel. The leaders of the Canadian Witnesses displayed such humility. I experienced brotherhood and unity such as I had not imagined. I was captivated by their warm, friendly smiles --- and to me, who was a nonentity in what the Jehovah's Witnesses believed was God's own organization. Small wonder they called this place "Bethel", which in Hebrew means "House of God". "Truly," I said to myself over and over, "there is no doubt that we are God's **only** people! I was, therefore, more than happy to work hard and make any sacrifice for our Society. It never entered my mind for one moment that one day a doubt, a tiny doubt, would enter my mind to make me think that perhaps things were not all they appeared to be; that is, not until ...

Chapter Four

The Beginning of my Deliverance

a) The first case of injustice

One day I met a young man who had just arrived in Canada from his native Greece. When I conversed with him, I learned that when he was fourteen years old, he was pressured into being baptized as a Jehovah's Witness by his mother who was herself a Witness. To please his mother, he was baptized; but he told me that he knew in his heart he was not really a Witness. Shortly after he was baptized, he stopped attending the meetings of the Jehovah's Witnesses and grew up as a "worldly" person. Among the Witnesses, the term "worldly" is applied to all people who are not Witnesses.

When he became a young man, he was drafted into the Greek military forces to serve two years of national service as was required by Greek law. When he completed his military service, he immigrated to Canada.

We began fellowshipping together. As we discussed the things of God, he told me that he had made a mistake by leaving the "people of God". He felt ashamed and had decided to return to the "house" of his Heavenly Father. He, therefore, began to attend our meetings regularly.

One day he said, "I would like to commit myself to God, so

that I can serve Him.” He also told me that he wished to be baptized again by the Jehovah’s Witnesses, but this time, out of his own free will, so that he could begin a new life of service to God. Everyone in our small congregation rejoiced when he was baptized.

A few days after this happy event, we, the committee of the congregation, received a letter from the Canadian headquarters of the Watchtower Society. The letter was about our newly baptized brother.

The letter stated that because this person had served as a soldier in the Greek army, we could not accept him among us as a brother! Further, the letter declared that for the next three years, we had to treat him as a disfellowshipped person, and that after this specified period, he could reunite himself with the “people of God”!!!

In the organization of Jehovah’s Witnesses, the harshest punishment that can be inflicted on a member is “Disfellowshipping.” Disfellowshipping or “disassociation” is the same as “excommunication”. If a Witness repeatedly committed an injustice, he would be “disfellowshipped”. This meant that the other Witnesses would not speak to him --- **ever!** It also meant that a disfellowshipped man or woman would not be allowed to visit other Witnesses at their homes. Likewise, Witnesses were not permitted to receive him in their homes nor were they allowed to visit him.

The disfellowshipped person had the right to attend meetings when they were held at the Kingdom Hall, but not when they were held in private homes. When he went to the meetings, the rejected member did not have the right to talk

to anyone. In fact, all the “real Christians” must have nothing to do with this unwanted former brother”.

If a Witness refused to obey this organizational rule, to completely ignore a disassociated member, and continued to be friendly or to fellowship with such an estranged person, then he would also be disfellowshipped.

This inflexible rule of treating disassociated people applied even among close relatives. A great concession was made to spouses and parents with children who lived under the same roof. In the event of one family member being disfellowshipped, other family members were permitted to speak to the alienated one, providing they did not, under any circumstances, discuss Biblical subjects! They were not allowed to hold any conversations dealing with spiritual topics. But, if the children were of age, then there could be a departing and **BREAKING OF FAMILY TIES** (See Watchtower, 11/15/52, page 703).

When I read that the Society commanded us to treat my friend and “brother” as a disfellowshipped person, refusing us the right to visit him, or to talk to him for three years, I became very upset. I immediately thought of the parable of the prodigal son as told by our Lord, Jesus Christ. I asked myself, “When the prodigal son returned to his father’s house, how was he received by him? Did the father command his servants to throw him out of the house? When his father saw his repentant son returning, did he punish him in any way? Did the father order his older son to have nothing to do with (disfellowship) his young, remorseful brother for three years?”

The answer to all these questions was, “NO!” On the contrary, the father opened his arms to welcome his son; he rejoiced and celebrated over the return of this young man.

I was really disturbed by this case. Many questions went through my mind:

- a) To whom does the organization belong?
- b) Doesn't our organization belong to God?
- c) Who is turning my repentant and humble brother away from the “house” of my heavenly Father?
- d) Is it God or is it the organization who refuses to allow him to return?

I was sure it was not God, because I didn't believe that Jesus misrepresented His Heavenly Father in the parable of the prodigal son. How did the Society justify its judgment? Upon which Biblical text, principle, or example did the organization base its decision?

Immediately, I wrote a letter of protest to the head office in Toronto. I asked for an explanation and for Biblical support for commanding us to treat a repentant brother in such an insensitive way.

They answered that their decision was “the policy of the Society.” They explained that my “brother” had willingly disassociated himself from God's organization when he was fourteen. Moreover, he had joined Satan's organization when he served in the Greek army. (The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that all military forces belong to Satan.)

I was not at all satisfied with this answer to my letter. Jesus told me (in the parable of the prodigal son), that I should rejoice, receive, and embrace a repentant and returning brother. His message is clear! The organization, on the other hand, was telling me to ostracize him, and refuse to speak to him for three years. To put it another way, God's policy for a repentant person was **FORGIVENESS, MERCY, and LOVE**. The policy of the organization of the Jehovah's Witnesses was **Revenge and Punishment!**

Again, while our Lord said, "*... there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents ...*", we, with a long face had to say to a repentant brother, "You are not allowed to associate with us for three years, because you left your 'Father's house' willingly...." But didn't the prodigal son also leave his father's house willingly? (Luke 15:7,12,13).

I was faced with a terrible dilemma. As I was a faithful servant of God, whose policy should I follow? Should I follow the policy of God or the policy of the organization of a publishing house? If I did not obey the Watchtower Society, they would punish me. I would be disfellowshipped! However, the Bible says, "*... you are slaves of the one you obey ...*" (Romans 6:16). **Whose slave, was I?**

My conscience was very troubled. It hurt me like a sharp knife. The pain almost caused me to cry out against the injustice, but I remained silent. I swallowed the shame and prayed, "My God, please forgive me. I believe in my heart that this is your organization. Perhaps, for reasons I do not fully understand, I allowed my heart to doubt your Holy Organization. Even though it appears to me to be mistaken, I feel sure that through the 'progressive light' You send, it will realize its error in time and will change its pol-

icy on this subject.” Therefore, I placed this case at the back of my mind, and I continued to serve the Lord (?) to the best of my ability.

Looking back, I can say one thing for certain: This whole sad event caused my heart to crack like a drinking glass, which, when it cracks, does not shatter into pieces immediately; nevertheless, it will never again return to its original, perfect shape.

b) The second case of injustice

One day, members of our congregation approached the judicial committee (of which I was a member) and told us about their suspicions that one of the Witnesses had grievously wronged another person.

The accused member was invited to appear before the judicial committee for us to discuss and judge the alleged offence. The accused refused to appear before the committee but wrote us a letter claiming that he was innocent. Although none of the accusers offered us any worthwhile or reliable evidence about the accused’s wrongdoing, we, the committee, disfellowshipped our brother based on organizational policy. The Society’s policy was that a person’s refusal to appear before the committee was a clear indication of his guilt. Therefore, his “guilt”, as shown by his absence, resulted in the committee’s decision to disfellowship him. We had no alternative.

The Witnesses believe that all those who are not members of their organization will be destroyed forever at “Armageddon” (God’s war against Satan and his followers). When a person is disfellowshipped, he is no longer a member of the Society. Therefore, there is a continual fear

among the Witnesses that if the coming Armageddon finds them disfellowshipped, outside the organization, God will destroy them forever. Thus, they view disfellowshipping as being equivalent to eternal death.

This fear causes many disfellowshipped persons to return humbly to the Society and beg for forgiveness, so they could be reunited. This act of contrition is understandable; it was fear that caused many members to join the organization in the first place --- they became members, so they could escape God's judgment and punishment. They live with the hope that because they are members of the Society, they will survive the forthcoming end of the world. Therefore, when a Witness is disfellowshipped, he panics! Suddenly, he feels that he has lost everything. He feels that now that he is no longer part of this organization, he has lost his only chance to inherit eternal life. He feels condemned and doomed. Consequently, he becomes depressed for the following reasons:

- a) When he meets other Witnesses outside, they will change direction or cross the road --- anything rather than go near him.
- b) Others, as soon as they see him, will look away from him --- anything to avoid his eyes.
- c) Everyone, even members of his own family, ignores his existence --- and in this sad way he will continue to live alone.

Another misfortune that befalls the alienated member is that the organization, through its teachings, kept him apart from the rest of the world. The Society encouraged him to

stop associating with his former friends. At the same time, some of his friends had stopped visiting him at his home, because they were not interested in the propaganda of his new religion, which he was forced to spread constantly. After all, he was brought to the point of believing in that propaganda himself. Thus, if he is later disfellowshipped, he readily believes that since he has lost his relationship with the Society, he has also lost his relationship with God (?). Moreover, since he is no longer a member of the Society, he believes that the shed blood of Christ will not save him. He is convinced that he could gain salvation only if he were to return to the Society --- God's Organization! How tragic!

There was another problem in the making. It concerned the member we had disfellowshipped. Some time after I went along with the judicial committee and signed the order to disfellowship this man, I began to have second thoughts. I asked myself, "Will God destroy this person forever because we disfellowshipped him? If this person did not appear before the committee maybe he had a good reason. Perhaps he was too embarrassed to appear. Besides, did he commit such a horrendous offence that God would destroy him if Armageddon would come tomorrow? Will God destroy a man because we judged him according to the policies of a publishing house --- but not the Bible, as unworthy of being a fellow member of "God's people"?"

Later, I discussed these thoughts with my friend Thomas. Together, we concluded that we humans are not worthy, or capable, or equipped to pass judgment between eternal life and death on our fellow human beings. God and His Son are the only appropriate, fair, and fit judges of humans, because They are the Ones who can read the kidneys and

hearts of men. (This expression means that God and His Son know the innermost thoughts and intentions of men; Jeremiah 11:20; Revelation 2:18-23).

We also realized, for the first time, that the Society's rules about disfellowshipping were not in full harmony with the Scriptures! The Jehovah's Witnesses' rule is (or was) as follows: If a Witness of Jehovah sees or hears one of his brothers committing a sin or doing an injustice, it is the Witness' duty to report him to the committee of the congregation. Then, the judicial committee will invite the accused person to appear before it. This procedure does not agree with the words of our Lord Jesus, who said,

“If your brother sins [against you], go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector” (Matthew 18:15-17. The words “against you” do not exist in older Greek manuscripts).

With the above words, our Lord showed that a Christian should **go alone** to talk to his sinful brother **privately**, to help him stop sinning. This advice of the Lord contains wisdom and love for the sinner. If the followers of Jesus were to apply in their lives the above advice, there would be no gossip, whispering tongues, evil thinking and the like, neither would the sinner be embarrassed before others. The Lord's emphasis here is to try to win the brother over, not embarrass or punish him.

If the first step in the process proves to be fruitless, then the second step must be followed:

“But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”

If the second step proves to be futile, and the sinner continues to sin, then the matter should be brought to the attention of the church, so that the entire church will try, for a third time, to “win” the sinner over. The church is not just three persons who make up a “committee”. Jesus did not say, “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the committee of the church;”. The church consists of all the believers --- **they are the Church!**

Then, Jesus said,

“... if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”

What a great difference there is between the words of our Lord and the rules of the organization of the Jehovah’s Witnesses.

When the Lord said, ***“treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector”***, what did He mean? To answer that question, we must know how the Israelites treated Pagans and tax collectors. **Did the Israelites never speak to them at any time?** Is it possible that they treated those Pagans and tax collectors in the same cruel, pitiless, and inhumane way in which we, the Witnesses of Jehovah, were ordered to treat our brothers who had been disfellowshipped?

The answer is, “NO!” They did not treat them in this merciless manner; perhaps they did not socialize together, but they spoke to them as the Jehovah’s Witnesses speak to the non-Witnesses and to the tax collectors today! Perhaps they looked down on them as sinners and idolaters, but they still talked to them about the things of the Bible, to bring them to repentance. **Jesus Himself spoke to them** (Mark 2:15-17).

Why did the Society order us not to speak to disfellowshipped persons, even to the point of refusing to greet them at any time? Their justification for such a policy was based, they claimed, on the principle which is found in the second epistle of the apostle John, verses 7-11. There, we read:

“for many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves ... if there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed (Greek text: do not say to him, “Hello”). For he that bid-dith him God speed (the one who says “Hello” to him) is partaker of his evil deeds”.

To whom does the apostle John say that we (the Christians) should not say “**Hello**”? Should we refrain from saying “**Hello**” to our Christian brothers who commit a sin because of a spiritual weakness, or to the deceivers, to the antichrists, who do not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh? It is obvious that John meant the latter. Otherwise, the apostle Paul would not have said to us,

“Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness;”
(Galatians 6:1).

How can we **restore** our sinning brother if we cannot even say, **“Hello”** to him?

The apostle John said that all of us are sinners and gave comfort to those who might sin in the future. He said:

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And he is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.” (1 John 1:8-2:2).

From the above, we see that if someone sins, he does not lose his relationship with God. He does not lose the eternal life. God still loves him. Even a compassionate human father does not kick his son out of the house when the son does something wrong or when he disobeys him occasionally. A good human father will do his best to help his son overcome his problems, and when that has been achieved, the father rejoices with his son. How much more will God rejoice when we repent of our sins? Doesn't the Bible say, ***“joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth”***? (Luke 15:7,10)

Yes, God loves us and rejoices when He sees us overcoming the weaknesses of our imperfect flesh through the blood of his Son. **His love for us was proven by the fact that He sent His Son to the earth to die for us.** His love is revealed in John 3:16, where we read:

“For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”.

If there were no chance for us to sin, we would not need His sacrifice to save us. This sacrifice has already paid for our sins two thousand years ago. It paid for the sins we committed yesterday, the sins we are committing today, and the sins we will commit tomorrow.

The previous scripture did not say that God gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever is perfect and sinless should not perish, but have everlasting life. **NO**, but it says that **whosoever believes in His only begotten Son** will not perish but have eternal life!

Jesus is our Savior; He is our Redeemer. When He bought us with His blood, He did not make us faultless, but He made us to be His own. As Master, He is able of keeping us in life! No one can snatch us out of His hands to destroy us. When we commit a sin (and we commit sins daily), Jesus our high priest who is eternal, mediates on our behalf **forever**. His function as a Mediator did not end for us the day we first accepted Him as our personal Savior! That's when He began to mediate for us! Please read the following scriptures:

“but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Thus, he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them” (Heb. 7:24,25).

“And I give unto them (to the “sheep”, those who follow Jesus) eternal life and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.” (John 10:28).

“Jesus said unto her I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die” (John 11:25,26).

Our heavenly Father is forgiving and loves all men --- even those who sin and ask Him to forgive them. To His people, He said:

“Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” (Isaiah 1:18).

If you, Dear Reader, are one of the many thousands of Jehovah’s Witnesses who have been disfellowshipped, do not lose your courage in this life. God did not disfellowship you; God did not cut you off from life; He did not remove the means for your salvation --- it was only an imperfect, manmade organization of a publishing house that disfellowshipped you from its ranks.

Jesus said, *“All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men; but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.”* (Matthew 12:31).

Take courage; do not let anyone depress you. You have not blasphemed against the Holy Spirit. The sins which men commit daily do not constitute *“blasphemy against the Holy Spirit”*. What is *“blasphemy against the Holy Spirit”*? Let us consider the following:

When Jesus expelled demons out of demoniacs, His enemies said, *“This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.”* (Matthew 12:24). Those who spoke the above words had seen the good and powerful works which Jesus had done before their eyes. They knew that it was impossible for a mere human to perform miracles of that magnitude. It was obvious that a supernatural spirit was operating in Jesus; but which spirit? There are only two sources of supernatural powers --- God or Satan.

For someone to distinguish the kind of spirit that dwells in a man, he must look closely not only at that man’s powerful miracles, but also at his fruitage (Luke 6:43-45). Does he produce fruit that glorifies Jesus? If he does, then God’s Spirit operates in him (John 16:13,14); if not, then, at least one demon dwells in him (Mark 5:1-13; Matthew 3:10).

The Bible says, *“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights ...”* (James 1:17). Jesus is the perfect gift of God which came down from the Father of lights. The fruitage of the human Jesus was perfect. His gifts to men were good. He taught love; He healed the sick; He delivered people from demonic captivity. Jesus never did any evil works. To those who met Him, it was obvious whose Spirit was indwelling Him. But instead of attributing these wonderful powers to the Holy Spirit of God, His enemies said that Jesus had an unholo (unclean) spirit (Mark 3:30). By doing so, they will-

fully blasphemed against the Holy Spirit; they called Him “unholy, unclean”. In their zeal to defend their religion, **they were quick to glorify Satan by saying that the power which was operating in Jesus** (when He was casting out demons), **was Satan’s**.

Dear Reader, if for some reason you have separated yourself from a group of people who willingly follow everything a man-made religious organization preaches, you are not guilty of the above unforgivable blasphemy against the Holy Spirit! Do not let anyone frighten you with this lie! Do not let yourself fall away from the Lord. If you have been overwhelmed by disappointment and depression, do not think of suicide. **GOD LOVES YOU!** He does not want you to die but wants you to be saved (1 Timothy 2:3,4). Think of my words and check out the scriptures with which I have provided you. Read your Bible and you will find numerous scriptures which show the love and, in case of sin, the forgiveness of our Lord.

Hope in Jesus --- not in a religious organization. In Jesus who is the **ONLY BEGOTTEN** Son of God --- not the only Son who was created by God! The expression “only begotten” shows clearly that the True Jesus of the Bible is not a creature, but the only Son of God’s essence and therefore, God by nature! Remember, it is not the name of a religious organization that saves but **the Name of the Lord Jesus**. The Bible says that “... *there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.*” (Acts 4:10-12).

c) Examining my beliefs

As Jehovah’s Witnesses, we had been trained to say to non-Witnesses that **when someone thinks he is in the truth, he**

should not be afraid to examine his faith with the Bible, simply because the Bible will prove him right! We also knew that the apostle Paul praised the Berean Jews for examining the Scriptures daily, to ensure whether the things he said were true. About them he wrote,

“These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.” (Acts 17:11).

Consequently, Thomas and I, also decided **to examine our “belief” by searching the Scriptures!**

Our search really impressed and surprised us. We spent many hours studying the Bible at night. I remember once that we studied all night until we saw the beautiful pink colors of dawn, and heard the joyous, early morning hymns of the birds as they praised the great Name of their Creator.

Day by day and night by night our joy increased. We both felt confident that we were doing this Biblical research in obedience to the admonition which the apostle Paul gave to Timothy and which, we felt, should be a necessary but pleasant task for all Christians:

“Earnestly study to show yourself approved to God, a workman unashamed rightly dividing the Word of Truth” (2 Timothy 2:15).

Therefore, for us to be able to preach correctly the word of truth, we were compelled to do this personal Bible study.

After the apostle Paul gave the above admonition to Timothy, he spoke about Hymeneus and Philetus and said that they “... *missed the mark concerning the truth, saying the resurrection already has come, and overturn the faith of some.*” (Verses 17,18).

Since the apostle Paul said that Hymeneus and Philetus had fallen away from the truth because they were saying that the resurrection had already taken place, what should we say about our organization? The Watchtower Society had taught us the same thing. It had taught us that the resurrection of the saints, of those who had died from the first century A.D. until the year 1918 A.D., had taken place in that year (Babylon the Great has fallen, page 459). Without having any Scriptural basis for this, we, the followers of the Watchtower Society, were preaching to the world that the resurrection of the saints had already taken place. Therefore, we, like Hymeneus and Philetus, had fallen away from the truth.

Also, we were taught that since 1918 A.D. onwards, every time one of the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ so-called saints died, he/she was resurrected immediately (or rather was changed into a spirit being) to meet the Lord in the air, so he/she can be with the Lord forever. But what did the apostle Paul say about the meeting in the air between the resurrected saints and the Lord? Did Paul say that the resurrected saints would meet the Lord in the air one at a time as they die on different dates, or that **the living saints and the resurrected saints will meet Him in the air together at the same time**? Let us read Paul’s words in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17:

“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, concerning those who sleep, that you not grieve, as the rest also,

not having hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will also bring with Him all those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. For we say this to you in the word of the Lord, that we the living who remain to the coming of the Lord not at all will go before those who have fallen asleep; because the Lord Himself shall come down from Heaven with a commanding shout of an archangel's voice, and with God's trumpet. And the dead in Christ will rise again first, then we who remain alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to a meeting with the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord."

The above expression, "***together with them***" appears in the Greek as "ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς" (ama seen aftis). The word "ἅμα" literally means "**at the same time**". The expression, "ἅμα σὺν αὐτοῖς" should be translated into English as, "**at the same time together with them**". The translators of the "New World Translation" have left out the expression, "at the same time". (Check the Kingdom Interlinear and compare the word-to-word translation on the left side, with the NWT).

From the above, we observe that the saints will not meet the Lord in the air one at a time as they die, but **all of them at once**. This event will take place when the Lord comes. At that time, the dead saints will be resurrected, and the living saints will be changed, and **all together, at the same time, will meet the Lord in the air.**

In 1 Corinthians 15:51,52, the apostle Paul explained this very clearly. He said that those of the saints who have fallen asleep will rise and the living saints will be changed **in a**

moment, in the twinkling of an eye, when the last trumpet blows:

“Behold, I shew you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”

In the above verse, the word **“all”** includes the dead (the sleeping) and the living saints.

As I explained earlier, the teaching of the Society had been contrary to the foregoing. They taught us that the dead saints were raised in 1918 A.D., and that they had met the Lord in the air at that time, while those of the saints who were still alive would meet the Lord in the air, one at a time, as they died. According to their thinking, their doctrine was based on 1 Thessalonians 4:16,17. There, as we read earlier, Paul wrote, “... ***the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up*** (at the same time) ***together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air....***”

In the above verses, the words **“first”** and **“then”** do not indicate that there would be a time span of, let’s say, eighty years between the meeting with the Lord in the air of the resurrected saints and that of the living ones who will be changed. **It is an idiom, an expression** which refers to the two groups of people: First, to the dead (sleeping) saints, and Second to the living.

Greatly surprised, Thomas and I saw that about the resurrection, the organization had misled us from the truth, as

Hymeneus and Philetus had misled others in their era. With zeal, we continued our intense study and in a month's time we discovered that twenty-two points of our faith were not in harmony with God's written word!

At this point my conscience bothered me very much. How could I talk from the platform of the Kingdom Hall, when I knew that the subject on which I was to speak did not agree with the word of God? (I should explain to the reader that the "talks" we gave from the platform were not our own but had been prepared by the Watchtower Society. We only provided the "voice"). How could I go from house to house preaching something which did not conform with the Bible? Because of this fact, I began to feel ashamed of our ministry; I felt like a hypocrite!

"Lord," I said, "isn't the Watchtower Society directed by Your spirit? How is it possible for the 'faithful and discreet slave class' to receive the spiritual food from You, as we so strongly believe, since this spiritual food is not in harmony with Your word? Why did we **constantly** have to keep up with the 'new light'? **How is it that the 'new light' that we often receive refutes 'yesterday's light', that is, yesterday's truths??** Will we ever come into the knowledge of the Truth?" (1 Timothy 2:4; 2 Timothy 3:7).

Many similar thoughts and questions flooded my mind. I had believed that the truth of the Bible was unchangeable; but why did the "truth" of the Watchtower Society change from time to time? In almost every publication of the Watchtower Society they presented "**new truths**" or "**new light**" on the various subjects of our faith. To me, this fact proved only one thing: **The previous "light", which the Watchtower Society had taught us, was false --- it was**

manmade! It proved that yesterday's "new truths" or "new light" were not truths at all but mistakes or lies! Consequently, if we accept that the "truths" which the "faithful and discreet slave class" had given us in the past were handed down to them by Jehovah God through His Son Jesus Christ, then, naturally, we had to assume that Jehovah God and the Lord Jesus Christ had either made a mistake, which they now corrected by means of the "new light", or that they had intentionally misled us. God help us!

d) Representative --- Whose?

The yearly conventions were events to which the Witnesses looked forward with excitement. One time, before a big convention took place in Vancouver, Canada, we were told by the Society that we would have to go from house to house in search of accommodation for those of the Witnesses who would come from outside Vancouver. We were also instructed that when we visited those houses, we should introduce ourselves as representatives of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.

When I read these words, I could not believe them. "Lord," I said, "as Christians, to whom do we belong? If we must present ourselves before men as someone's representatives, whom should we be representing? You, or the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society?"

A few days later, I was appointed to give a public talk at the Kingdom Hall. The "**Public Talk**" is one of the five weekly meetings the Witnesses must attend. Every Witness invited other people, who were not Jehovah's Witnesses, to come to this meeting.

Before the speaker goes onto the platform, the chairman introduces him to the audience, and declares the theme of his lecture in the following words:

“Dear friends, Mr. Joe Doe, **who is a representative of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society**, will speak on the following subject...”

When the time came for me to give my public talk, I approached the chairman before he walked onto the platform and I said,

“Brother Smith (not his real name), please do me a favor. Do not introduce me today as a representative of the Watchtower Society. Just introduce me as a Christian brother.”

The chairman was choked. His color and features changed. With a face charged with anger, he asked me,

“Why, brother? Are you not a representative of the Watchtower Society?”

“No,” I answered, “I am a representative of the Lord. I am going onto that platform to preach His word. **My talk must bring glory to God --- not to a publishing house.**”

My decision to give the glory to God marked the beginning of the end between me and the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.

Chapter Five

The Vision of the Skull

It was a Saturday morning --- one day before I was due to give my public talk. After breakfast, my wife and I decided to go shopping. We were both well rested and in good spirits.

At about 10 o'clock, we were at the supermarket placing groceries in the buggy. Suddenly, I felt tired. Very rapidly, I became increasingly tired. I was really perplexed by this feeling, because hardly two hours had passed since I rose from bed after a good night's sleep.

I told Joyce, my wife's nickname, that it would be best if we stopped shopping, because I felt overpowered by a strange tiredness. I told her that I felt the need to lie down somewhere. Quickly, we paid for our groceries and hurried home.

Once we were home, I felt the need to take another shower before I went to bed. After I showered, I put on my pajamas and then went into our bedroom. Immediately, I sat in bed, and I began to lean towards the pillow. Before my head touched the pillow, I heard a loud knocking at the front door. At the same time, I heard the front door opening by itself.

I sat up. I heard the quick steps of someone walking in the hallway between the front door and my bedroom. I wondered who it could be. Who would feel free to open our front door and walk inside? I wondered how I could meet that person while I was in my pajamas.

I did not have a chance to do anything because the door of my bedroom opened by itself. To my great surprise, I saw a very beautiful woman, a relative, standing in the hallway facing me.

“Costa”, she called using the short form of my Greek name, “come to the living room.” She then walked there.

Not knowing what to think, I followed her out into the hallway dressed in my pajamas. I took two or three steps towards the living room. Suddenly, in the hallway, I met a friend who was a Witness of Jehovah. He was running towards the front door.

“Nick!” I said, “When did you come in? Why are you leaving?” He did not answer. From the expression on his face, I realized that he had seen something which had given him a feeling of fear and disgust. He looked into my eyes and silently continued his way out.

As I walked towards the living room, I passed the kitchen doorway to my left, and looking into the kitchen, I saw my wife putting the groceries into the cupboard. She was quite calm. It was obvious that she hadn’t heard anything or seen anyone.

I walked a little further. In the dining room, next to the dining table, I saw a man standing. He was half naked. The

only clothing he wore was lady's pink underwear. I realized that this was the person from whom Nick had run away. I took one or two steps towards him, and he vanished into thin air.

I looked in the living room. Sitting on chairs along one wall, were old men and women. As I walked into the living room, I saw the beautiful woman who had not let me go to sleep earlier. She too suddenly vanished into thin air.

"Costa", said one of the older women who were sitting on the chairs, "do you recognize us? Do you know who we really are?"

I looked at them carefully. They were my ancestors --- those who brought me to life.

"Yes", I replied, "you are my ancestors; it was through you that I received life."

She rose from the chair and came close to me; she looked straight into my eyes and said, "Costa, look at us a little closer; examine us more carefully and you will see who we are."

I looked at her face; it changed and took the likeness of an older spiritual sister who was a member of our congregation. It was she and her husband who were the first couple to support our Greek meetings in Vancouver. Let's call her Sister Hope.

"We", Sister Hope continued, "are not the ones you thought we were. You did not receive life through us..."

While she was talking to me, her face changed again and became that of a man.

“... from now on you have nothing to do with us ...” he said.

The moment he said these words, a golden tooth shone inside his mouth. He continued,

“... neither do you have anything to do with the man you saw (he meant the man who was wearing the pink underwear). Your relationship from now on is with the woman who would not let you sleep earlier, and with her husband, who now builds up his body, and with his father.”

While he was talking to me, his face changed slowly before my perplexed eyes. His skin and flesh disappeared from his face. All that remained were the bones of a skull. The skull had dark holes for eyes; it had teeth, but no lips; it had a mouth, but no tongue.

I woke up in bed. Only a few moments had passed since the time I had gone to my bedroom. I rose from bed and went into the kitchen. There, I saw my wife still putting the groceries into the cupboards. I continued to be tired for a few hours that day.

What had happened to me? As soon as I sat on the bed, I entered a spiritual dimension. And yet, the house was the same. I heard, and I saw things which my wife obviously had not seen or heard. Everything had been so real! What should I call this experience? A vision? A dream? Being in the spirit? I do not know what to name it. But I do know that the prophets, the men of God, had similar experiences.

The prophet Daniel describes one of his experiences to us. He wrote:

“Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground ... And I was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the King’s business; and I was astonished at the vision ...” (Daniel 8:18,27).

But is it possible to have such things happen today? The organization had taught us that these kinds of phenomena had ceased since the death of the apostles. How was it possible for me to experience something like that? Something more vivid and intense than reality!

Immediately, I studied the Scriptures on this subject. I wanted to examine all the verses which said that the gifts or the operation of the Holy Spirit had ceased with the death of the apostles. I found none! There aren’t any! On the contrary, the Bible says that **in the last days**, God will pour out His Spirit ***“upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit.”*** (Joel 2:28-32).

Also, in the book of Job, chapter 33 and verses 14-17, we read:

“For God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man, in slumberings upon the bed; Then he openeth the ears of men, and sealeth their instruction.”

From the above scriptures I realized that even in the last days, God, through His Holy Spirit, would give dreams and visions to His servants, in order to educate them. Therefore, I realized that God had used the forgoing biblical way of communicating to educate me also.

In another place, God said: “... *Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream.*” (Numbers 12:6)

If there is a respected book in the world which speaks about dreams and visions, that book is the Bible. If you wish to verify this statement, examine the following verses:

Genesis 28:11-16; 37:5-10; 40:5; 41:1-32; 1 Kings 3:5,15; Daniel 2; 8:18; Matthew 1:18-24; 2:11,12,19-21; 17:9; Luke 1:22; Acts 2:17; 9:10,12; 10:3,17,19; 11:5; 16:9,10; 18:9; 26:19; 2 Corinthians 12:1; Revelation 1:9,10.

The only verses the organization of the Jehovah’s Witnesses uses to mislead its followers on this subject and to make them believe that the pouring out and the gifts of the Holy Spirit ceased with the death of the apostles are 1 Corinthians 13:8-13. Let us study these verses carefully to determine if this is what these verses say:

“love never fails. But if there are prophecies, they will be abolished; if tongues, they shall cease; if knowledge, it will be abolished; for we know in part, and we prophesy in part; but when the perfect thing comes, then that which is in part will be caused to cease. When I was an infant, I spoke as an infant, I thought as an infant, I reasoned as an infant. But when I became a man, I did away with the

things of the infant. For now we see through a mirror in dimness, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will fully know even as I also was fully known. And now faith, hope, and love, these three things remain; but the greatest of these is love.”

When I read the above verses, I observed that the expressions “all these gifts will cease with the death of the apostles”, or “all these gifts will cease as soon as the Bible is compiled into a book”, **do not exist! These expressions are not part of God’s written word;** they are merely part of a doctrine which some groups choose to believe! To further pursue my study, I examined first the words of the apostle Paul and then the words of the apostle John to ascertain the time or period at which the pouring out and the gifts of the Holy Spirit will cease.

In 1 Corinthians chapter 13, the apostle Paul refers to the gifts of the Spirit, which he mentioned in chapter 12. He compares the value of these gifts with “love” and says that if someone has the gift of speaking in tongues, or the gift of prophecy, or the gift to know all the mysteries, and has all the knowledge, but does not have love, he is nothing (verse 2).

In verses 8-13, he writes that while all the other gifts of the Spirit, such as prophecies, languages, and knowledge will cease someday, “love”, he says, “never fails”; is eternal, and greater than faith and hope.

In verse 10, the apostle says that the gifts of the Spirit will cease “**when the perfect comes.**” When will the “**perfect**” come?

In verse 12 he says: *“For now we see through a mirror in dimness, but then face to face. Now, I know in part, but then I will fully know even as I also was fully known.”*

Where he writes the word *“then”*, he means *“when the perfect comes”* --- *“then”* we will see *“face to face”*. Whom will we see *“face to face”*? What was the apostle Paul seeing as through a mirror? Paul gives the answer in 2 Corinthians 3:18, *“... we all with our face being unveiled, are beholding the glory of the Lord in a mirror ...”* (from the Greek text).

John, the disciple of Christ, wrote, *“Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it was not yet revealed what we shall be. But we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is.”* (1 John 3:2).

In Revelation 22:1-4, we read that when all things become perfect, *“and every curse will no longer be”*, the servants of God will serve Him, and they *“will see His face;”*.

Therefore, it is *“then that the perfect will come --- when we will see Him face to face!*

“Then”, the gifts of the Spirit, such as prophecies, languages, the gift of healing, etc., will cease.

“Then”, the need for these gifts will not be there, because we will be with the Lord and we will be seeing His glory and His face forever. But *“love”*, for instance, will remain forever because the eternal God is love.

But how about Paul's expression, "*Now faith, hope, and love, these three things remain*"? Does the word "*now*" refer to the future? No, because the verb "*remain*" is in the present tense! When Paul wrote this sentence, had he and the other Christians of his era already lost the other gifts of the Spirit? Of course, not (1 Corinthians 14:1)! Obviously then, the word "*now*" **is not temporal** --- it does not refer to time. **It is logical.** Paul used it in the sense of "**Now**, what about faith, hope, and love? Will these cease like the other gifts of the Spirit?" His answer is "**NO!**" These three **remain**. (The verb "*remain*" has been translated from the Greek "**μένω**" (meno) which means "I stay unshakable, I stay through time, I continue, stand". It also means: "remain", but not with the idea of remaining as a left over.)

Therefore, as the "*perfect*" has not yet come, all the gifts and operations of the Holy Spirit must still be among us, having been given to different members of the body of Christ for the benefit of the entire body (1 Corinthians chapter 12).

Prophecies and languages are not the only gifts of the Spirit. The gifts also include: the word of wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, the discerning of spirits, visions, dreams, revelations, etc. (Acts 16:9; 10:3-20; 9:10; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Joel 2:28-31).

All the gifts of the Spirit continue to operate in the Church today. The gifts, which the believers in Christ displayed starting with the day of Pentecost, were the actual proof that the promised Helper, the Spirit of Truth, had arrived to be with them --- not just until the death of the apostles, not just until the Bible was completed as a book, but "**forever**" as Jesus said,

“And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Paraclete to be with you forever”* (John 14:16 from the Greek text).

If anyone believes that the gifts of the Spirit ended with the death of the apostles, he has not thought through the implications of his/her belief. The presence of the Holy Spirit in believers is shown by the presence of His gifts. The absence of the gifts indicates the absence of the Holy Spirit. Absence of the Spirit also means the absence of joy and the rest of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

It is not difficult to imagine the spiritual condition of a body of believers in which the Spirit is not present. The absence of the Spirit means the absence of the Lord. If the Lord is not present, then, Truth and Life are not present. If the Spirit of the Lord is not present, freedom is not present because the Lord is the Spirit and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom (2 Corinthians 3:17).

Does the Bible say anywhere that when the apostles die, or when the Bible is completed as a book, the different gifts Jesus gave to the body i.e. apostles, prophets, evangelists, teachers, and pastors will cease to exist (Ephesians 4:8,11)? Does it say anywhere that the gifts of the Spirit which He gave to the above members of His body would be removed and that only the pastors would remain? Can the pastors offer to the body all the benefits God intended to give

* The Greek word Paraclete (Παράκλητος) is composed of the words “παρά” and “κλητός”. It means “the One who is called to stay” or “the One who is called to be with *you*”.

through the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the teachers? If the answer is “NO!”, then, **how can a prophet prophesy without the operation of the Holy Spirit, i.e., without direct inspiration, or dreams, or visions?** (Numbers 12:6)

Thus, as the “Body” of the Lord is still here on earth and as the Holy Spirit is with us today, then, **all His gifts must be with us**. These gifts will help the believers in their Christian walk until the “*perfect*” comes, the Kingdom of God, which all of us are waiting for.

The above study on the operation of the Holy Spirit on our day brought me joy and hope. It also helped me to overcome the fear which I had as a Witness of Jehovah, because we were taught that these kinds of phenomena in our day were simply the work of Satan.

As I made sure from the Scriptures that my extraordinary experience could indeed be the work of the Holy Spirit, many questions entered my mind:

- a) What did God want to show me with the vision of the skull?
- b) What did the half naked man symbolize?
- c) What did those from whom I thought I had received life symbolize?
- d) What role would Sister Hope play in my life?
- e) How could I “try” this vision to make sure that it was the work of the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:1)?

I trusted the true statements of Deuteronomy 18:22, and John 16:13:

“When a prophet speaks in the name of Jehovah, if the thing does not happen or come about, that is the thing which Jehovah has not spoken; that prophet has spoken it proudly; you shall not be afraid of him.” (Deuteronomy 18:22)

“But when that One comes, the Spirit of Truth, He will guide you into all Truth, for He will not speak from Himself, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will announce the coming things to you.” (John 16:13)

Thus, if my vision was a prophetic one, would I meet a Witness of Jehovah, a man with a golden tooth who would say to me, “... you have nothing to do with us from now on ...”? I wonder if I would be disfellowshipped!

Was it possible that the Lord showed me events which were about to unfold soon, giving me the courage to face them? In any case, I had always been ready and willing to do God’s will. If the Lord had decided to get me out of the organization of the Witnesses, I would say, “Let Your will be done”. After all, was God not the One who indicated to me, when I was eighteen years old, that I should remain in this organization?

What can I say? Perhaps the Lord now wanted to kick me out of His organization because I might not be perfect before His eyes. Perhaps I was not worthy of being part of His people. Perhaps He had already judged me as being unworthy to receive eternal life. Or perhaps He would let

me be destroyed at Armageddon (the final battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil).

What could I do? Could I demand eternal life from God? If the Righteous Judge had already judged me as one who deserved to die, let His Name be glorified. I would praise Him and thank Him until the moment He destroyed me, because I truly loved Him. Love never fails. I decided to praise Him for what He is, to thank Him because He gave me the honor to know Him, and because He allowed me to admire His magnificent creation for the few years He allowed me to live....

After all, I was in total agreement with His righteous laws. If I could not keep His laws in my life, and God must deprive me of life because He wants to have only perfect people in the coming new system of things, I would accept my destruction with joy. Doesn't everything in the entire universe really move and exist according to God's will and laws? Why should I not accept my destruction with joy, if it would make my Creator happy?

But, really, would God who is **Love**, be happy in my destruction? Why was I even thinking of "destruction"? I suppose it came from the years I spent with the Jehovah's Witnesses. It is a word that the Jehovah's Witnesses often think about and use in their everyday language. The Society had taught us that if, for some reason, we were to withdraw from, or be forced to depart from the Society, God would "destroy" us.

And yet, the vision of the skull did not show that God would destroy me. On the contrary, it showed that God loves me. I was told that my relationship from now on

should only be with the “beautiful lady”, her “Husband” and his “Father”. In my spirit, I realized that this “woman” symbolized the “bride” of Christ. He is the One who perfects or builds up His “body”.

Who is the body of Christ? The apostle Paul gave the answer to this question in 1 Corinthians 12:27. There, he said to the Christians, “... *you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.*”

Paul spoke again about the “*body*” in his letter to the Ephesians, chapter 4 and verses 12 and 13. He wrote, “*with a view to the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all may come to the unity of the faith ...*”

Now, I had to consider the next mystery: What did the half-naked man, the one who was wearing lady’s pink underwear, symbolize? What did it mean that he was standing by our dining table?

He was a picture of the governing “body” of the Watchtower Society, which is composed only of men. This “body” rules with immense authority over those who willingly follow it. This “body” also ruled over me through the “Mother Organization”. In the Greek language, the word “organization” is in the feminine gender. Through “her”, he had “served” his so-called “spiritual food” onto our table, for many years. Was it possible that the time had come for me and my friend, Nick, to see the “nakedness”, i.e. the mistakes and wrong doings of the “Mother Organization” and of her governing body? If my spiritual insight were correct, then it would not be long before they would dis-fellowship me. This likelihood was made plain, in my vision,

by the man with the golden tooth who said to me "... from now on, you have nothing to do with us, neither do you have anything to do with the man you saw ..." (the one with the pink underwear). It became clear to me that God was telling me through the vision that my relationship from now on was not to be with the "body" of the publishing house, "The Watchtower", but with the "body" of Christ. Clearly, then, the "body" of the Watchtower had nothing to do with the "body" of Christ.

As a Witness of Jehovah, I had been led to believe that because I was a member of the organization and because I had accepted the sacrifice of Jesus, I had passed from death unto life. I believed that if I remained faithful to Jehovah's organization, I would certainly survive Armageddon, and I would inherit eternal life. But, through my vision, the Lord showed me that my belief was wrong. The Witnesses **were not** the ones through whom I had come to life. **The only One who gives life is Jesus.** All who believe in Him will never die. Before Jesus died on the cross, He cried out, "It is finished!" The work He had to do was completed. His death and His shed blood was enough to pay for the sins of all mankind --- including mine!

Thus, I remembered that the Holy Scriptures say plainly that whosoever believes in Jesus will have eternal life. It does not say "whosoever believes in Jesus and is a follower of the corporation of the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses will be saved." The Scriptures clearly say that only He who is the Life can give life. From the vision of the skull, I realized that all men and their false religious organizations cannot give eternal life, because in them there is only death and corruption. All men, and especially those who make up the so-called "holy" organization of the Witnesses, need the

True Jesus of the Bible who is God's **only-begotten** --- not only created --- Son, **to be saved**.

These thoughts shocked me. Although I'd had this vision, it was not easy for me to desert the religion which I had loved and trusted more than anything else in my life. As I said earlier, I had long ago reached the point where I said, "I put my life and the lives of my family into the hands of the Mother Organization"!! What should I do? How was I supposed to act?

The Lord had already answered these questions in the vision. I believed that if the Lord had decided to get me out of the organization of the Witnesses, the events would simply follow the order which He wanted and, whether I liked it or not, one day I would be an outsider. So, for the first time in my adult life, I put my life into the hands of God.

The visit to Sister Hope's

Sunday came. It was the day on which I had to deliver my public talk. After I had given the talk, many people came from the audience and congratulated me. Sister Hope was one of them. Her words of encouragement greatly raised my spirits. At that moment, I forgot the vision of the skull which I'd had on the previous day, and the fact that Sister Hope was in that vision, and asked her:

"Sister Hope, may I come to your apartment tonight to pay you and your husband a visit? I would like to sit down with both of you to discuss a serious subject. I have researched the Bible, and examined some of the doctrines of our organization, and I would like to discuss them with you."

“It will be our pleasure, Brother,” she answered.

That evening, I sat in the living room of their apartment. As I mentioned earlier, Sister Hope and her husband had been Jehovah’s Witnesses for many, many years.

Before I continue, I must explain the following point. The Witnesses of Jehovah believe that 144,000 persons only will go to heaven to be with the Lord. They believe that those 144,000 can be people from every tribe, nation, and language of the world. According to their thinking, their doctrine is based on Revelation 7:4, where John wrote,

“And I heard the number of those having been sealed: one hundred forty four thousands having been sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel.”

In verses 5-8, John identifies the names of those twelve tribes of the sons of Israel. He wrote, *“Out of the tribe of Judah, twelve thousand having been sealed. Out of the tribe of Reuben, twelve thousand having been sealed. Out of the tribe of Gad, twelve thousand having been sealed ...”* etc. Thus, 12 thousand individuals out of each one of the 12 tribes of the sons of Israel, equal 144,000 individuals.

To give their doctrine the outward appearance of correctness, the “teachers” of the Jehovah’s Witnesses have split verse 4 into two parts. They explain the first half of the verse **“literally”**. In other words, they say it means exactly what it says. Therefore, they say that the number 144,000 is literal. But they interpret the second half of the verse in a **“spiritual”** way. In other words, they say that the verse says one thing, but it really means another. In this case,

they say that the twelve tribes of the sons of Israel do not refer to Israelites by birth, but they symbolize a spiritual Israel, the anointed Jehovah's Witnesses who can be of every tribe, nation, and language of the world.

There was a time when the Jehovah's Witnesses (then known as "Bible Students"), believed that every dedicated follower of the Watchtower Society was part of the 144,000 sealed ones. But in the 1930s, they changed their doctrine and decided that all the new followers of their organization are not part of the 144,000. However, they stated that although the new followers were not sealed and, therefore, had no hope of ever living in the heavens with the Lord, there was another hope for them. They could entertain the hope of living in a paradise-like earth --- a hope which could be realized only if they remained faithful to the organization. These second-class Christians are called "other sheep".

When I was baptized as a Witness of Jehovah, our leaders opened a new "file" (a card), which contained my full name, the date of my birth, the date of my baptism as a Witness, and whether I was part of the "anointed" class (i.e. of the 144,000), or whether I was part of the "other sheep". They automatically placed me in the class of the "other sheep", and told me that my hope, as a Christian, is to live in a paradise-like earth. They told me that because I became a Christian Witness of Jehovah in the 1960s, I could not possibly go to Heaven to be with the Lord because the fixed number, 144,000, had already been completed. Now, looking back, it makes me very sad to hear people, who claim to be Christians, preach that whether one goes to Heaven to be with the Lord is determined by a **date**, rather

than whether a person is born again, as Jesus said (John 3:3).

It is very depressing to hear a class of people who try to appear before men as the “sealed” ones of the Lord, twisting the explanation John gives in verses 5-8. It is so annoying and irritating to see them misleading millions of people, causing them to believe that the number 144,000 is “literal”, and that the twelve tribes of Israel are “spiritual”, especially when one number is dependent on the other. It is impossible for someone to multiply two “symbolic” numbers, that is, according to Jehovah’s Witnesses, $12 \times 12,000$, and expect the result to be a “literal” number. Simple arithmetic proves that the exegetical ability of the “teachers” of the Watchtower Society is inadequate. If the twelve tribes of Israel of Revelation 7:5-8 are not literal, then John identified the names of the tribes in vain. The explanation which the Jehovah’s Witnesses give is incorrect.

Nevertheless, Sister Hope and her husband professed for many years that they were part of those sealed. Thus, according to our belief, they were both part of the “faithful and discreet slave” class. Therefore, the Spirit of God should have been operating in them. What a blessing this would be for me, to have an opportunity to discuss with them the conclusions I had drawn when I carefully examined the doctrines of our organization under the light of the Scriptures!

I sat in front of them. We spoke in Greek.

“My brothers,” I began, (in Greek, the expression “My Brothers” refers to both men and women when they are both present), “I am visiting you this evening to talk about

a very serious matter. It's a subject which I would like to discuss with both of you before I talk to anyone else. I would like you both to give me your opinions and advice. I know that you have been in the Truth for many years. (The Witnesses call their organization '**The Truth**'. This practice constitutes an insult to Jesus who said, 'I am the Truth'.) I also know that you profess to be part of the anointed remnant of the 144,000. Certainly, your life-long Christian experience and the spirit of the Lord which operates in you should enable you to give me sound advice." They both nodded with agreement.

"My brothers," I continued, "I have done much research recently --- an examination of our belief according to the Scriptures, and I have arrived at a crucial position. I have discovered twenty-two points of our doctrine, which are not in harmony with the Bible. This discovery is such that my conscience bothers me at the thought of going out preaching door to door or even preaching from the platform at the Kingdom Hall. I need your advice. What would you do in my position?"

They both asked me to tell them some of the points I had discovered in my research. As I presented and explained my research, I was totally surprised to see them nodding their heads in agreement with my ideas. In fact, they added more light to my recent findings! They explained to me that the ideas I had told them were concepts they had known for many years.

"My brothers," I said, "you really surprise me. You are saying to me that the facts I recently discovered, by the grace of God, are facts you have known for a long time! But I

don't understand how could you keep these truths to yourselves all these years? How can you remain quiet now?"

"Oh, brother Costa," Sister Hope answered, "the Truth, the organization of the Lord, is like a lady, who walks slowly, but surely. If we do not want to fall away from the Truth, we must walk along with her. We must not walk slower than her, because we will get behind, but we should not walk faster than her either, because we could become heretics. For me, brother, there is only one joy in life: To follow the organization, because it is directed by the spirit of Jehovah God. I have seen many Jehovah's Witnesses who stood up in the past and made a noise about a few truths they discovered; what did they achieve? Nothing! They were disfellowshipped and they were lost in the world. Where are they now? What are they doing? Nothing! No one hears about them. But we are not lost; we are still inside the organization, and we are preaching, and"

"Sister Hope, excuse me ... " I interrupted, "Do you think it is better for someone to 'think' that he is doing the will of God and yet willingly preach a lie out of the fear of facing disfellowshipping, or to speak the truth like Jesus did, even if they were to disfellowship him, as others 'disfellowshipped' Jesus, even unto death?"

"No, brother," she replied, "it is not very nice to preach a lie, but it is not very nice to be disfellowshipped either. It is not good to become lost in the world. Personally, I want to die as a Witness of Jehovah. When I die, my wish is to be covered in my coffin with publications of the Watchtower Society."

When I realized her attitude, I did not say anything else. I returned home and prayed to God. I asked Him to make me brave to speak out the truth, and not to hide it like they did. I asked Him to give me the courage to obey the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, who said:

“Therefore, you should not fear them, for nothing is covered which will not be uncovered; and hidden, which will not be made known. What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light. And what you hear in the ear, proclaim on the housetops.” (Matthew 10:26,27).

As soon as I left the apartment, Sister Hope informed on me. She called the overseer of our congregation and gave him a detailed account of our confidential meeting. I learned later that she told him that she had become physically sick over the anti-organizational lies I had told her. He, in turn, advised her not to say anything to anyone. He also told her that the time would come when he would need her to testify against me before the judicial committee.

Monday

One of the families of our congregation invited my wife and me over for dinner. At dinner, I was surprised when they asked me questions about my Biblical research. I wondered whether the dinner invitation was a chance offering or a planned event by someone who wanted to have evidence against me.

Tuesday

Another family from our congregation invited my wife and me to visit them at their place after the congregational meeting. We talked about my research until very late that evening. Was that invitation by chance also?

Wednesday

Our congregational overseer came to our apartment and rang the bell. He refused to come upstairs to our second-floor apartment. Through the intercom system, he asked me to meet him downstairs, outside the building. When I met him, I noticed he had a sad expression. He was very cold and abrupt towards me. Even his "Hello!" was delivered in a cold, impersonal manner. He handed a note to me. It was an invitation for me to appear before the Judicial Committee. My trial will take place on Friday evening. No charge was indicated.

Thursday

From "whispering tongues" I heard that the decision had already been made to disfellowship me. I also learned that they would charge me with trying to persuade people to follow me as the leader of a new sect. They would also claim that I had told my brother Witnesses to leave the organization.

This day, I phoned all the Witnesses of our congregation and asked them to come to the Kingdom Hall where my trial would take place. I asked each of them to testify that I had never asked them to leave the organization, nor had I ever asked them to follow me as a leader. Most people told me that they would attend my trial to testify for me.

Friday

My trial took place at a Kingdom Hall in New Westminster, British Columbia, about twenty miles east of the city of Vancouver. Almost everyone from my congregation was present, some as witnesses against me (those I had visited this week) but the vast majority to speak on my behalf.

The judicial committee consisted of the district servant, the circuit servant, and the congregation servant of a congregation from Vancouver. (For an explanation of these titles, please see page 44).

When everyone sat down, a member of the judicial committee walked up onto the platform and made an announcement. He said that the trial would take place in the basement. He also stated that the committee had decided to call the witnesses to come down to the basement one at a time to give evidence; everyone else was to remain upstairs.

I immediately stood up and in a very polite manner I asked that my trial take place upstairs before my brothers and sisters in the faith. To support my request, I explained that in ancient Israel, the accused person was tried by the gate of the city, **so that everyone present could listen to the accusations**. If the accused person were found guilty, and was sentenced to death by stoning, the crowd would have to carry out this sentence. Having heard the evidence and being convinced of the accused's guilt, each person would be able to throw stones with **a clear conscience**. I pointed out that it would be immoral for anyone to throw a stone when one did not know what the accused had done. Likewise, I asked that my brothers and sisters hear about my alleged crimes. Although I could hear many of the spectators murmuring their agreement with my request, the decision was not theirs to make. The judicial committee overruled my request. The committee and I walked slowly down to the dark, chilly basement. Let the reader understand the reason I called it "dark" and "cold"!

When we sat, I noticed that along with the judicial committee sat the other two members of the committee of our congregation.

When the trial got underway, the chairman of the judicial committee called one witness at a time from the list of witnesses who had come to testify against me. In this way, none of the people waiting upstairs heard any of the insubstantial and hollow accusations or any of the vague and erroneous testimony against me.

The trial lasted six hours. During that time, I lived unforgettable moments of joy and sadness. I felt joy because I was defending the Truth of God's word; at the same time, I had feelings of sadness when I thought of the low level into which my spiritual brothers had fallen --- **those who had accused me with hatred.**

I thought, "Why do they suddenly hate me? I am defending the glory of the Most High God. Don't they love God?"

Then, more questions came into my mind:

1. What became of the love they had shown me previously?
2. What became of the pleasant words they had used when they spoke to me prior to this day?
3. Why do they suddenly speak against me with such hatred? What was my crime?
4. **Was it wrong to study the Bible?**

5. I had discussed different points of our faith with my spiritual brothers --- **was that an offence?**

6. Was I an evil person because I knew the Greek language and was able to see that the Jehovah's Witnesses' translation of the Bible, that is, the "New World Translation", did not agree with the Greek text of the New Testament?

7. **Did I commit an offence because I discovered the numerous mistakes which the Jehovah's Witnesses translators had made?**

8. **Was I responsible for their errors?**

9. **Should I or they be the ones to appear before a judicial committee about those mistakes?**

During the trial, one of my accusers (the one who had invited me and my wife to his house for dinner on Monday night) said that when I visited him at his house, I really upset him because I said that we, today's Jehovah's Witnesses, could not be the "*great crowd*" which comes out of the "*great tribulation*". The expressions "*great crowd*" and "*great tribulation*" appear in Revelation 7:9-17. There it says:

"After these things I saw and behold, a great crowd which no one was able to number, out of every nation, even tribes and people and tongues ... Having been clothed with white robes ... And one of the elders answered, saying to me, These, the ones having been clothed in the white robes, who are they, and from where did they come? And I said to him, Sir, you know. And he said to me, These are those coming out of the great tribulation;"

The Society had taught us that we, the modern-day Witnesses of Jehovah, are this “*great crowd*”. So, the president of the judicial committee, our district servant, asked me in a superior manner:

“Is it true brother Lenis that you do not agree with the explanation which the ‘faithful and discreet slave’ gives on this point?”

“My brother,” I answered, “from where does this ‘great crowd’ come? What does the book of Revelation say?”

“Out of the ‘great tribulation’,” he replied.

“Tell me, brother,” I said, “according to the organization’s latest ‘new light’, when does this ‘great tribulation’ take place? Did it take place in the period of 1914-1918 A.D., as we previously believed, or is it going to take place in the future?”

He looked at me in a peculiar way, as if he understood my point but did not want to admit that he had. I’m sure he remembered that the Society had recently changed its teaching on this issue.

“In the future,” he answered curtly, “the great tribulation will take place in the future, when this system of things comes to an end.”

“Then, brother,” I said, “as the great tribulation has not yet taken place, but will come in the future, how is it possible that we, today, are this ‘great crowd’ which will come out of the ‘great tribulation’? If we will not live to see this

‘great tribulation’, how will we see the ‘great crowd’ which comes out of it?”

The expression on his face showed that he agreed with my thinking. He looked at my accuser and said,

“Brother Lenis is right. It is impossible for us to be that ‘great crowd’, because this ‘great crowd’ will appear in the future. The ‘great tribulation’ must come first.”

I smiled.

Immediately after these words, things changed. None of the members of the judicial committee wished to hear more of my “demonic teaching”, as they called it.

Later, Sister Hope came to the basement. My eyes opened wide as I heard the first lie coming out of her mouth. She told the committee that she had no idea why I had visited them last Sunday evening.

“But” I protested, “I had explained the purpose of my visit to Sister Hope.”

“Quiet!” said a committee member.

Sister Hope continued with her accusations. She recounted how I had made her sick with my explanations of the different subjects we had discussed. She explained that the reason she felt physically sick was that my explanations were not in harmony with the explanations of the organization.

“But” I interrupted again, “Sister Hope told me that, for many years, she had believed many of the points we discussed. How could my words possibly have made her sick when I said nothing that she did not already know and believe in? Ask Sister Hope yourselves whether I am speaking the truth.”

“Quiet!” the president yelled. “Be quiet! It is **you** we have on trial here --- not Sister Hope!”

Sister Hope sat in the front row. I sat in the row behind, and a little further to the left. When she finished her accusations, she stood up, turned towards me, and looked through her glasses into my eyes. Then she said,

“I’m sorry, brother Costa, for talking this way, but **I had to**. I did it because I love you; I wanted **to help you**.”

The moment she looked me in the eye and said those things, I recalled the vision I’d had last Saturday, and it began to make sense. I began to realize that she and the members of the judicial committee were helping me to see the hypocrisy of the servants of my organized religion. **I began to believe that the Witnesses were not the ones I had thought they were, just as Sister Hope had told me in the vision!**

The trial started **at 6 o’clock** in the evening and finished at **11:20**. The committee allowed five hours to hear the accusations of four people but, at 11 o’clock they permitted all those who had waited patiently upstairs to join us in the basement. To those 50 or 60 people they allocated only twenty minutes to speak on my behalf. At 11:20 the audience was dismissed. They were dismissed quickly because

when they had come downstairs and were told the accusations of those four people, they became angry and turned against my accusers. It became very noisy in the basement because of the great controversy that developed. As I explained earlier, my accusers had said that I had told them not only to leave the Watchtower Society, but that I had also tried to persuade them to follow me. **Both lies!** Meanwhile, my supporters were becoming increasingly vocal. They insisted that I had committed no offence. Moreover, they claimed that everyone had the right to discuss Biblical matters. During this war of words, the hate and fanaticism of a few brought tears into the eyes of some of those present. Everyone was asked to leave and as they did so, I realized that I was not alone with my feelings of having been unjustly treated this evening.

When the audience had departed, one of the committee members glared at me and, in a voice that revealed how upset he was, asked:

“Are you happy now? See what you’ve done! Now do you see the kind of controversy you’ve caused?”

“My brothers,” I answered, “I certainly never expected something like this to happen. Really, I don’t see any reason for such a controversy to have taken place. As Christians, don’t we have the freedom to discuss Scriptures among ourselves and to meditate on them?”

“Yes, we do have complete freedom to discuss things,” said the president of the judicial committee, “but we should always harmonize our thoughts with the publications of the Watchtower Society.”

“Are you saying, brother,” I said, “that as Christians, we must harmonize our thoughts with the Watchtower and not with the Holy Scriptures?”

“Brother,” replied the president, “you know that the Watchtower Society is directed by the spirit of God. If the Watchtower does not explain a point well today, the spirit of Jehovah God will enlighten “her” (the Mother Organization) to correct it tomorrow. In the meantime, we must faithfully follow the spiritual direction, and feed on the spiritual food which the “faithful and discreet servant” gives us through the Watchtower; otherwise, we will bring confusion to others, as you have done this evening.”

“My brothers,” I said, “don’t we believe that the ‘faithful and discreet slave’ is a ‘class’ of persons amongst us to which God gives the spiritual food through His Son, so that they, in turn, will give it to others?”

“That’s correct,” the president answered. Then I said:

“When a person of this ‘class’ of the ‘faithful and discreet servant’ receives the truth on a certain matter from God, should he continue to preach the ‘lie’ until the Society validates it as correct and prints it in the publications? Are they responsible to God or to the Watchtower Society? Would it be right for them to hide the truth out of fear that the Watchtower Society might be offended if they were to speak that truth? In such a case, do they run the risk of being disfellowshipped if they speak out? Further, is the truth a matter of pride as to who will present it first?”

“No!” said the president, “It is not a matter of pride; but we must exercise wisdom so that we will not cause confusion such as we had this evening.”

“I agree” I said, “this upsetting situation, this turmoil, should not have occurred. I’m sorry it happened. What can we do now?”

“Now,” said the circuit servant, looking at me with an undisguised expression of hatred on his face, “tie a rope around your neck, tie a big stone on the other end, and throw yourself into the ocean, because we are thinking that we will disfellowship you!”

I could not believe my ears. Our circuit servant, my spiritual brother who was supposed to look after the well-being of several congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses, was actually encouraging me to commit suicide and instructing me how to do it. I knew by his tone and expression that he wasn’t kidding. He was telling me that it would be better for me to take my life with my own hands than experience the great tribulations and the emotional pains I would suffer for the rest of my life if I were disfellowshipped.

I then asked, “On which law or rule of the Bible will you base your decision to disfellowship me? I admit that I have discussed with my spiritual brothers different biblical points, but surely, this is not a Scriptural reason for disfellowshipping. The apostles did not disfellowship any of those who were responsible for the discord which took place in the church at Antioch with the case of circumcision.” I was referring to Acts 15:1-3, where we read:

“And going down from Judea, some taught the brothers, saying: If you are not circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. Then dissension (discord) and not a little disputation with them having taken place by Paul and Barnabas, they appointed Paul and Barnabas and some others of them to go into Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this question.”

No one paid attention to what I said. They repeated over and over that I must be disfellowshipped. Therefore, I asked again:

“On what Scriptural law will you base your decision to disfellowship me?”

This time, the president of the committee answered:

“Because you spoke about topics which are not in total harmony with the doctrines of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, you are a heretic. As a heretic, we can disfellowship you.”

I was amazed and bewildered.

“Even so,” I said, “in Titus 3:10, the Holy Scriptures say, *‘A man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition reject’*. If we suppose that I am a heretic, you should sit down with me and try to ‘admonish’ me two times. Don’t you think that you will act contrary to the word of God if you disfellowship me as a heretic without first giving me two admonitions on the subjects I discussed with my Christian brothers?”

The president of the committee said:

“We have given you two admonitions in the past; I personally gave you one, and your congregation overseer gave you another.”

I felt the blood rushing to my head. I could not believe that the president of the judicial committee who was judging me, the responsible person of a whole district to which thousands of Jehovah’s Witnesses belonged, a person who had been appointed into this elevated position by God’s organization (as I then believed), a person who should have God’s spirit, **was lying!** To prove that he was a liar, I asked:

“When, on what dates, did you give me two admonitions? On which scriptural subjects did you try to admonish me? Which scriptures (verses) did you use to admonish me? Who are the people who sat as witnesses during these admonitions?”

He remained silent. He said nothing because he had no answer to these questions. At this moment, the three committee members had no human expressions; they were cold and hard as stones! They looked like living dead. I realized I had better not expect justice from these people, who had no fear of God, neither did they display any traces of Christian love. When these two characteristics are absent, what is left in a man?

Again, I wondered, why did they have to judge me? Why did I have to appear before them as if I were a criminal? What had I done? I sought the glory of Jesus --- the One who died on the cross to save me! Is it possible that the name “JESUS” was changed through the centuries and be-

came “Watchtower Society”? Is it the name “**Watchtower Society**” that should be glorified?

That night I experienced moments of joy and sadness of the highest degree. I felt great joy because I identified with the Christians of the first century, who were dragged before their religious leaders for the sake of the name of Jesus and who were “disfellowshipped” (Mark 13:9; John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2). In the end, I was told that they would give me their decision on Sunday.

Sunday -- the announcement of my disfellowshipping

On Sunday morning, I heard a knock at the front door. I ran quickly to open the door. The three members of the judicial committee were standing there. They had long, somber, gloomy expressions.

“Mr. Lenis,” said the president, “we have come here to give you our final decision.”

“My brothers,” I responded, “please come in.”

“No, thank you,” he replied politely. “The only thing we came to tell you is that we disfellowshipped you.”

I asked, “For what Scriptural reasons did you disfellowship me?”

“The reasons are three,” he said. “First you are **a heretic**; second, you are **a rebel**; and third, you are **an apostate**.”

“Am I a heretic, a rebel, and an apostate from the Bible, or from the organization?” I asked.

“No, not from the Bible,” he answered. **“You are a heretic, a rebel, and an apostate from the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society.”**

At that moment, he was judged by his own words. His answer drew an invisible line between me and them and made one thing very clear --- **the Watchtower Society which they represented and served, had nothing to do with the Bible.**

“Then,” I said with a smile, “I do not worry at all about this disfellowshipping as it is completely unscriptural. Actually, you have made me very happy by disfellowshipping me. You have done this to me because I defended the Most High God and His word.”

They looked at me with sarcastic and arrogant expressions; they turned their backs on me and walked away without another word.

That same afternoon, I sat patiently in the Kingdom Hall waiting for the meeting to finish. At that time, I knew that during a part of the service we called “Final Comments” the congregation overseer would have to announce my disfellowshipping.

As the meeting progressed, I noticed that those present were not at ease. There was tension in the air. The congregation overseer, who was directing the study of the Watchtower magazine, was trying very hard to avoid looking at me as I sat close to the front row. He was not the only one; I looked around a few times and noticed that some of my

brothers and sisters were pretending they did not notice me, while others smiled at me and gave me very faint nods of recognition. I realized that, through gossip, they had been made aware of my disfellowshipping.

The time for the ‘Final Comments’ arrived. To my surprise, the congregation overseer did not stay on the platform to make these comments. Instead, he stepped down and made way for one of the members of the judicial committee who had disfellowshipped me.

There was dead silence. Even the babies in the congregation became quiet for the next few moments.

“Brothers,” he said, “Mr. Lenis has been disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation.”

He did not announce the reasons for my disfellowshipping. Yet, the policy of the organization was that when a disfellowshipping is announced, the reasons for it must also be announced.

I was upset by the fact that the reasons were not given. I knew enough of human nature to realize that if the reasons for a person’s disfellowshipping are not given, other people will imagine the most evil reasons for his being disfellowshipped. Many are disfellowshipped among the Witnesses because of sins such as fornication, adultery, drunkenness, and the like. In my case, the congregation was given the freedom to choose any or all the foregoing sins together with any others they liked to imagine. I did not feel comfortable with this awkward situation. I immediately stood up and with as steady a voice as I could master, I said,

“Please, brother, announce from the platform the reasons for my disfellowshipping.”

Throwing an angry, hate-filled look at me, he turned towards the audience and called out in a loud voice:

“Disperse at once! Go home! I forbid you to discuss the case of Mr. Lenis amongst yourselves! Do not remain in this Hall a moment longer! **Go!**”

Immediately, loud discord and clamor broke out. None of the audience liked the manner in which he had commanded them. They became even more upset by the way in which he was chasing them away as if they were disobedient dogs. He showed very clearly that he did not have a trace of respect for them. They also resented the way in which he deprived them of their freedom of speech --- the most basic possession of all free humans, whether Christians or not! Then again, should I have been surprised? Wasn't he one of those three who had disfellowshipped and thus removed from me, in such an insensitive manner, **my freedom of speech**? I wonder how a system like the one he represented can exist, function, and prosper in a free world? It still astonishes me!

I am amazed by the fact that religious fear, which thrives upon the ignorance of God's Word, can manipulate minds and turn free humans into captives.

The loud, angry voices of the crowd filled the Hall. One person, who held some Watchtower magazines, threw them up in the air as hard as he could. He then walked angrily from the Hall.

When I walked outside, I met one of those who had testified against me before the judicial committee. For some reason, he had not attended today's meeting, and had not, therefore, heard the announcement of my disfellowshipping. He drove his car over to the sidewalk across from the Hall's entrance.

"Hello, Costa!" he greeted me from inside his car, "How are you?"

Hello!" I answered. "Be careful; do not let anyone see you talking to me, because today, they announced my disfellowshipping".

"Wha-a-a-t?" he said and opened his eyes wide. "The snakes! They promised us that if we testified against you, they would not disfellowship you! They told us that their only purpose was to help you! Wait a moment, and you will see what they are going to hear from me!"

With that, he jumped out of his car and ran towards the Hall. His wife yelled loudly from inside the car, "Don't! Don't do it! You'll get into trouble! Come back!" Paying no attention to his wife's warnings, he ran quickly into the Hall.

It was as if an earthquake of great magnitude had shaken our Greek congregation, which we had named "Thessalonian" unit. That Sunday was the last time our congregation was united --- the congregation which my wife and I had worked so hard to organize. Many realized that I had been disfellowshipped in an unjust and unchristian way. Within days, the beautiful fellowship that my wife and I had carefully nurtured simply disappeared. About half the "mem-

bership” departed; some of them never returned to the Society.

Almost immediately, I began to write articles which appeared in the “Hellenic Echo”, the Greek newspaper in Vancouver. These articles exposed some of the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ ways. The controversy grew. Shortly thereafter, the headquarters of the organization ordered the “Thessalonian” unit, the only Greek congregation in Vancouver, out of existence.

The foregoing events, which took place for one week, proved that the vision I’d had that Saturday morning, was true and prophetic. Sister Hope and the rest of them played their role well to help me realize that:

* The Witnesses as an organization are not the ones I thought they were.

* God would not give me eternal life because I had been a faithful follower of a religious organization.

* **No man or man-made religious organization has the power to give life.**

* **No religious organization died on the cross for the sins of mankind.**

* Man’s eternal salvation does not depend on which religious organization he/she belongs to, but **on the work that Jesus did on the cross.**

* Salvation does not depend on spending many hours in house-to-house “ministry”, or doing any other “works”, or performing religious rituals, neither does it depend on one’s attendance at the meetings of a religious organization.

* Salvation is **God’s gift** to believers. They don’t have to work to receive it. If they must work for it, then it is not a gift, but a demanded and rightful payment. The apostle Paul wrote, “... *by grace you have been saved, through faith and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God; not by works, so that no one can boast.*” (Ephesians 2:8-10). I thank the Lord for extending His mercy upon me. I thank Him for my salvation.

* My relationship from now on should be with Jesus, with his “Bride” and with His Father. From now on I should have a personal relationship with them. Praise God!

The man with the golden tooth!

Now, I feel it’s a good idea to report one more detail. In my vision of the skull, while Sister Hope was talking to me, her face changed and became a man’s face - remember? That man told me, “... from now on you have nothing to do with us”. When he said these words, a golden tooth shone in his mouth. As events unfolded, he never appeared anywhere. Who was he? His face was well imprinted in my mind, and yet, here I was, disfellowshipped and I had never met a person with a golden tooth. Was there still a chance of seeing this small detail of the vision fulfilled?

Immediately after my disfellowshipping I sent a letter to the headquarters of the Society in Toronto. I complained about my unjust and unscriptural disfellowshipping. I gave them evidence that proved that the head of the judicial

committee and the congregational servant had lied about having given me two admonitions.

You see, the admonitions must be given to a person, when that person is a proven heretic. Thus, the following are valid questions:

- a) When had they proved that I was a heretic?
- b) If they had proof that I was a heretic for a long time before my disfellowshipping, why had they allowed me to be a public speaker only six days prior to my disfellowshipping?
- c) Would they have permitted me to be in the position of “Theocratic Ministry School Servant” until the day of my disfellowshipping?
- d) How was it possible for them to let me retain my position as the third person of the three-member committee of our congregation until the day of my disfellowshipping?

These questions remain unanswered.

Also, a few days before I was disfellowshipped, another important event took place: The organization decided to adopt the title “**elder**” in the congregations. Up to that time, all those who held a responsible position in the congregation were called “servants”.

Before a “servant” received the title “elder”, he would have to undergo a detailed examination of his character; the oth-

er “servants” in the congregation would be his judges during a special meeting.

When the appointed day of our special meeting arrived, all the “servants” in our congregation were present. Also on hand was the “circuit servant”, the one who later sat on the judicial committee which disfellowshipped me --- the “Christian” who encouraged me to commit suicide. He presided at the special meeting.

During that meeting, the character of each “servant” was analyzed and judged in every detail by the others. If anyone had a fault, it would have been exposed that night, so that he would not have qualified for the title “elder”.

When my turn came to be judged, everyone agreed that there were no reasons to prevent me from receiving the title “elder”. Although I was only twenty-three years old, my love of God and my knowledge of the organizational “truth” were evident. They all agreed that I should become an “elder”. I was honored! They therefore sent my name, along with the others, to the Society’s headquarters, with the recommendation that I should be appointed as an “elder”.

That evening, our congregational servant was present. If, in the past, he had given me the first admonition as a Bonafide heretic, should he not have disclosed such a serious offence? If I was a known heretic, and had reached the point that the district servant himself was forced to give me a second admonition, would it have been remotely possible that the circuit servant and the other “servants” in our congregation had heard nothing about it? I think not!

Nevertheless, “Bethel” (the name of the headquarters of the organization) replied to my letter. They stated that they saw my points and they would allow me to appeal my case before another judicial committee, which they would appoint.

A few days after I received this letter, I received a phone call. The person on the phone told me the time and date of the new trial, and its location. The purpose of the new trial was to review my disfellowshipping. I was also told that **I did not have the right to bring any witnesses with me.** The voice stressed that **I must go there alone!**

When I entered the Kingdom Hall where the new trial was to take place, I received a big surprise. **The president of the new judicial committee was the man with the golden tooth!** I had never seen him before in my life --- only in my vision! At that moment I just knew exactly what his final words would be!

I sat down before the judicial committee. I noticed that there were two other people in the room, two people I had met previously. They were the congregational overseer of the Greek congregation, the one who had lied against me, and a member from the first judicial committee, the one who had announced my disfellowshipping to our congregation. From their facial expressions I realized that this meeting was fixed: Five “officials” against a disfellowshipped person who did not have any other person with him as a witness. You understand....

It didn’t take long for me to realize that the man with the golden tooth had been greatly influenced by those two. He began talking to me in a very sarcastic manner. As he did so, the others had very superior, sneering smiles. Golden

Tooth asked me to use the Bible and explain one of the points of my research. I did not have a chance to say one word because the person who had announced my disfellowshipping, placed his hands over his ears and yelled loudly that he refused to listen to my demonic teaching. I was completely amazed. He had **never** examined the conclusions of my research, and yet, he had already judged my findings as demonic. How could anyone find justice from a blind, religious fanatic like him?

Next, Golden Tooth rose from his chair, and came slowly towards me, a grim look on his face. He looked me in the eye and said, word for word, **“From now on you have nothing to do with us!”** When he spoke these words, the golden tooth glittered in his mouth!!

During that meeting, I had not been given a chance to defend myself. In other words, the supposed “review of the first trial”, never took place. The entire meeting lasted ten minutes. The prearranged verdict was pronounced by Golden Tooth: “From now on, you have nothing to do with us!”

When I realized that this small detail of my vision had also been fulfilled, I thanked the Lord because he had shown me, in a miraculous way, the nature of the organization in which he had placed me when I was fourteen and reaffirmed when I was eighteen. He displayed its nakedness --- the lies and the injustice that exist in its ranks, in its laws, and in its rules. He showed me the hypocrisy of its leadership, and its totalitarian concept of justice. My good Heavenly Father allowed me to experience these tribulations in order to be able to expose them and to prevent others from falling into their trap. Through these experiences, I learned that my obedience should be to God alone (Hebrews 5:8),

not to a man-made religious organization which **has the audacity to demand the obedience which belongs to Jesus** in order to survive (Hebrews 5:9). If I had not experienced these events myself and someone had told me that such hypocrisy and injustice existed in our ‘Holy Organization’, I would not only have disbelieved him, but I would also have rebuked him for having such detestable thoughts.

After the so-called “reviewing” of my disfellowshipping, I wrote a letter to the governing body of the Watchtower Society. I asked them to handle my case personally so that they could bring an end to the injustice. At the same time, other Jehovah’s Witnesses wrote letters to the governing body, asking them to rectify the great injustice that had taken place. The governing body ignored us completely. They didn’t reply to anyone. It seemed as if the governing body of the Watchtower is not interested in the salvation of men as they so righteously proclaim, neither are they interested in justice. They proved to me that their only interests are to bring through the front door of **their** Kingdom Halls (not God’s), where **they**, (not God), rule as kings over their subjects, more people than leave, or are forced to leave, through the back door!

Before I finish this chapter, I would like to mention one more subject. Do you remember Nick, the fellow I saw in my vision, running away silently after he saw the half-naked man, the one who was wearing the pink underwear? According to that vision, he would also see the “nakedness” of the organization, and, in disgust, he would flee from it. Well, that is exactly what happened. It didn’t take long before he and his family left the Society of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. **The vision of the skull, which the Lord gave**

me, was fulfilled in every detail (Deuteronomy 18:22; 1 John 4:1).

After these events took place, I left the religious organization which I had loved more than anything else in the world. I left knowing that because I had stood for the Truth and had been disfellowshipped, I would be shunned for the rest of my life by my father, mother, brother, nephews, nieces, in-laws, and Jehovah's Witnesses friends --- all of whom remained in the organization (Matthew 19:29). Although it was a very painful separation, I left believing that the Lord wanted me to be outside of that tyrannical and oppressive religious organization. The time had come for Him to rescue me from the spiritual darkness that surrounded me, so that He could help me to see the Light and to develop the kind of relationship which must exist between Him and His children. Otherwise, He would not have given me such a wonderful and true vision. Praise His Name!

Chapter Six

The Dream about Mercury

In John 14, verses 15 to 17, Jesus said,

“if you love me, keep my commandments. And I will petition the Father, and He will give you another Comforter, that He may remain with you forever; the Spirit of Truth. Whom the world cannot receive because it does not see Him. But you know Him, for He abides with you, and shall be in you.”

Jesus also said,

“But I will tell you the truth, it is advantageous for you that I should go; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you ... But when that One comes, the Spirit of truth, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak from Himself, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will announce the coming things to you. That One will glorify Me, for He will receive from Mine and will announce to you. All things which the Father has are Mine. For this reason I said that He receives from Mine, and will announce to you.” (John 16:7,13-15).

From the above scriptures we learn that the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, will dwell in those who believe in Jesus,

those who love Him and keep His commandments. We also see that the Comforter will guide the believers into all Truth, He will announce to them the future things, and He will glorify Jesus. And I, Costas Lenis, bear testimony that the above words of Jesus are true, because I have experienced many times the wonderful guidance of the Holy Spirit as He has announced future things to me and at the same time, He glorified the Lord Jesus.

Jesus also said,

“What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light. And what you hear in the ear, proclaim on the rooftops.” (Matthew 10:27).

Therefore, it is good to tell others the things the Lord teaches us, especially to those who are members of His body, “for the building up of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12).

The Psalmist said,

“I shall ... live and declare the works of Jehovah.” (Psalm 118:17).

When Christians tell other Christians about the wonderful things God has done for them, they are helping one another to take courage, and to continue to praise the name of God in gladness.

The Bible is a book full of these kinds of stories. When we read them, we are rejoicing for the wonderful things God has done for His servants. The visions, and even the tribulations of the holy prophets and of the apostles of our Lord

Jesus Christ, have strengthened the faith of many and have led them to the pure worship of the One and only true God.

As we learned earlier, the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, who will guide us into all truth, **will be with the believers forever** (John 14:15-17; 16:7,13-15). That means **He is with us and in us today**. Thank God for this because today there are many misleading religious groups in the world, and, for this reason, we absolutely need the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the spiritual insight of a man is very limited. For this reason, it is easy for Satan to blind the thoughts of the unbelieving, who do not have the Holy Spirit, so that the brightness of the gospel **of the glory** of Jesus Christ will not dawn on them (2 Corinthians 4:4).

One of the most important things God is personally interested in, is our worship of Him. When He gave the ten commandments to Moses, He began with, *“You shall not have any other gods beside Me”*, and He continued with *“You shall not make a graven image for yourself, of any likeness which is in the heavens above, or which is in the earth beneath, or which is in the waters under the earth; you shall not bow to them, and you shall not serve them; for I am Jehovah your God, a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of fathers on children, on the third and on the fourth generation, to those that hate me; ...”* (Exodus 20:3-5).

Although all Christendom agrees that God hates idolatry, there are “Christian” groups which are guilty of idolatry. Satan has managed to import different and complex types of idolatry which men cannot always detect with their own limited spiritual insight. I was one of those men. When I

was in the religious group of the Jehovah's Witnesses, I could see, quite easily, the idolatry that existed in other "Christian" groups. But I never entertained the thought that perhaps our organization, which was always ready to point out the faults of others, **was also guilty of idolatry**. Perhaps I maintained this position, because I could not see any visible idols. Or perhaps, when a person grows up in a religious group where he sees his parents, his brothers and sisters, his fellow Christians and the leaders of his faith, worshipping something they are not supposed to worship, he gets used to it, and does not view it as something wrong and inappropriate. He thinks that if everyone does it, it must be all right. Because of his uncritical devotion he tries to justify the wrong doings of his religious group by using human reasoning. In other words, he rationalizes the behavior.

When I was a Witness of Jehovah, I was guilty of this sin. I was unaware of this fault, until the Comforter led me to the understanding of this important truth through the following dream:

"I stood on the sand of the seashore, looking at the sea. Suddenly I felt a great fear. I looked behind me towards the north, and I saw an amazing sight.

I saw before me a very high mountain. The mountain tops were so high that they seemed to be touching the sky.

When I looked at the mountain tops, I could not look at them for longer than a split second, because they poured forth a blinding, pure, white light. The brightness of these tops was many times brighter than the glory of the sun.

The mountain tops were in the shape of birds with white heads. They all had the same height and size. They looked like bald eagles.

The foot of the mountain formed itself into the shapes of eagle's claws. The appearance of the mountain was awesome. I was ecstatic.



Suddenly, I had a strong desire to find a way, a path, which would take me to the land that lay behind this great mountain. I felt that this land was my home.

I looked carefully at the mountain. It was very steep, and completely treeless. There were no trails that I could follow to lead me home.

My desire to go home became stronger. I looked left and right, all along the seashore.

Suddenly on my right, I noticed the silhouette of a man standing close to some stones which were near the sea. His body seemed to have neither flesh nor bones. He looked like a mirage, like a spirit. As he stood there, with his back towards the sea, he raised his right arm and pointed straight ahead towards the mountain.

Because I was standing a great distance from him, I could not see the thing which he pointed. I realized that he wanted me to come towards him so that he could show me something.

I walked towards him. As I got closer, he disappeared into thin air --- vanished!

When I arrived where he had stood, I looked towards the mountain, and I saw a sight that both surprised me and troubled my spirit. Between the rocky claws of the birds, there was a cave.

At the back of the cave, I noticed an opening that resembled a door or an entrance to a tunnel. A yellowish light, which looked as if it were produced by a very small light bulb, shone from the tunnel's entrance. This tunnel was supposed to be **the only way** which would lead to the desirable land.

The floor of the cave was not the natural sand of the shore. It consisted of green, shiny, man-made ceramic tiles.

At the cave's entrance, facing north, stood a very tall statue which resembled the statue of Mercury by the Greek sculptor, Praxiteles.

Before the statue, I saw men and women dressed in ancient robes. They knelt as they worshipped the statue. **Their leader was a priest of Mercury who was commanding them to worship the statue.**



This priest of Mercury was the congregational servant, the one who had lied against me at the judicial committee saying that he had given me one admonition! The worshippers of Mercury were my spiritual brothers and sisters, the Witnesses of Jehovah I knew!

When I saw that scene, I became very upset and cried out, 'No! Don't do this! How can you worship Mercury in the

twentieth century? As Christians, we must worship the true God only!’

The priest of Mercury forbade them to talk to me. Some of them looked at me with an expression of love and sadness but **remained silent because of their fear of the priest.** Then I spoke to them again. I told them that I refuse to join them in their cave of **idolatry.** The priest of Mercury became very angry. He bent over, grabbed a stone and threw it at me, intending to injure me. The stone missed me.

I walked towards the right side of the cave and climbed on to the rocky claws of the mountain. I looked around; the place was very dry. There were no plants or vegetation of any kind. I thought, ‘It hasn’t rained here for a long time, if it has ever rained at all’

I climbed down and stood again at the entrance of the cave. As I looked at the great statue of Mercury and its worshippers, I said to them, ‘There is no way that I will enter this idolatrous cave. **I refuse to pass through this tunnel and to pollute myself with your idolatry, just because you say that your tunnel is the only way which can take me to the desirable land. I will look for another way.**’

After I spoke, I walked away from the cave and along the sand on the seashore. Then, **I saw a few of the worshippers of Mercury who had overcome their fear of the angry priest, rising and walking silently away from the cave.**”

The Interpretation of the Dream

When I woke up that Saturday morning, I pondered about the vision. What could it mean? I could not understand it.

But in my heart, I knew that the One who gave me that mystery would also give me its interpretation. Thus, I asked Him to help me understand.

At noon, my wife, our two little boys and I were sitting around the table. As we ate and discussed the vision, its interpretation came to me in a flash. I realized immediately that my vision could be completely explained through the Bible!

The Bible is a book of symbols. The holy men of God who wrote the books of the Bible were moved by God's Holy Spirit. It was God's Holy Spirit who gave them visual or descriptive symbols in dreams or visions. For us to understand the message of my vision we should examine from the Bible, the symbols of my vision. Since God's Holy Spirit is unchangeable, the meaning of the symbols He gives remain the same throughout the centuries. The symbols I will explain are:

- a) **the sand by the sea;**
- b) **the sea;**
- c) **the great mountain;**
- d) **the faces of eagles;**
- e) **the cave;**
- f) **the rocks;**
- g) **the tunnel;**

h) the statue of Mercury.

Now, let us examine the above symbols under the light of the Scriptures:

a) **The “sand”**. In my vision, I stood on the **sand of the seashore**. What does the “sand” symbolize? Does the Bible compare anything to the **sand**? Yes, it does. When God gave a promise to Abraham, He said, “... *blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your seed like ... the sand which is on the seashore ...*” (Genesis 22:17). **Therefore, the sand is a symbol of the seed of Abraham!**

Who is the seed of Abraham? Only the ones by birth? **No!** The apostle Paul says that **all Christians are seed of Abraham**. Let us read his words from his letter to the Galatians, chapter 3 and verses 26-29:

“for you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus ... There can not be Jew nor Greek; there is no slave nor freeman; there is no male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are in Christ then you are a seed of Abraham, even heirs according to promise.” (Galatians 3:26-29).

Thus, the fact that I was standing on this symbolic “sand”, meant that because of my faith in Jesus, I am part of Abraham’s seed.

b) **The “sea”**. From the seashore, I was looking at the “sea”. What does the “sea” symbolize?

The prophet Isaiah wrote: ***“But the wicked are like the troubled sea which cannot be quiet, and its waves cast up mire and dirt.”*** (Isaiah 57:20).

From this verse, I saw that the “sea” is a symbol of the **unbelieving and wicked mankind**. Each “wave” of the sea is a symbol of a **wicked individual**. The apostle Jude gives us a similar symbolism in his epistle; he calls the wicked individuals ***“wild waves of the sea”***. Let’s read these verses:

“These are sunken rocks in your love feasts, feasting together with you feeding themselves without fear, waterless clouds being carried about by winds; fruitless autumn trees, having died twice, having been plucked up by the roots; wild waves of the sea foaming up their shames; ...” (verses 12,13. Also meditate on Luke 21:25, Matthew 13:47 and 4:18).

One day, this symbolic “sea” will cease to exist (Revelation 21:1).

c) **The “great mountain”**. A “mountain” pictures a “kingdom”, a “government”, whether political or religious. Nebuchadnezzar, the King of Babylon, had a dream. In that dream he saw a stone which struck an image and broke it into pieces. **That stone became a great mountain and filled the whole earth**. The prophet Daniel explained the dream to the king, saying:

“You, O king were seeing ... until a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them into pieces ... and the stone that

struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.” (Daniel 2:31,34,35)

As Daniel continued, he explained what this great mountain symbolized. **He said that it symbolized the kingdom of God.** He said,

“And in the days of these kings, the God of Heaven shall set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed. And the kingdom shall not be left to other people. It shall break in pieces and destroy all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.” (Daniel 2:44).

The prophet Isaiah also used the terminology **“mountain”** and said,

“And it shall be in the last days, the mountain of the house of Jehovah shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills (Isaiah 2:2,3).

Using the foregoing symbolic language, the prophet simply says that in the last days, **the kingdom (or government) of the house of Jehovah will be exalted above all other kingdoms, whether these kingdoms are big (like mountains), or smaller (like hills).**

d) The “faces of eagles”. The peaks of the mountain, in my vision, were in the shape of heads --- heads of bald-eagles. What do the **“faces of eagles”** signify?

The student of the Bible will easily realize that the eagle is associated with God Himself. **The eagle depicts God’s ability to deliver people from their captivity and His**

ability to lead people by giving them His wisdom. In the book of Exodus, God says to the Israelites whom **He delivered from their captivity in Egypt,**

“You have seen what I did to Egypt and I bore you on wings of eagles and brought you to Me.” (Chapter 19:4)

Also, in Deuteronomy 32:11, we read:

“As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: so the Lord alone did lead him.”

In a vision, the prophet Ezekiel saw four cherubs (cherubs: angelic beings); these cherubs had four faces each. **One of the faces was a face of an eagle.** Ezekiel described them as follows:

“And the likeness of their faces: the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side to the four of them, and the face of an ox on the left side to the four of them; and the face of an eagle to the four of them.” (Ezekiel 1:10).

Also, in the book of Revelation we read that John, the disciple of Jesus, had a similar experience. When he was invited to go up to Heaven, he saw four living creatures standing around the throne of God. **One of these creatures looked like a flying eagle.** John describes them:

“And the first living creature was like a lion; and the second living creature like a calf; and the third living creature having a face like a man; and the fourth living creature like an eagle flying.” (Revelation 4:7).

The eagle flies swiftly and has powerful eyesight which enables it to see a great distance and exercise good judgment; thus, from the brilliant faces of the eagles, I realized that **it was God's will to give me insight and wisdom, to enable me to see the disgusting idolatry which existed inside the organization of the Jehovah's Witnesses.** For this reason, **I believed that God was the One who had delivered me from the Watchtower captivity.**

e) **The "cave"**. The next thing I saw in my vision, was a "cave" at the base of the mountain. What does the "cave" symbolize?

From the Scriptures we learn that from ancient times, caves were used as hiding places. Moved by fear, people ran to caves to avoid being annihilated or devoured (Judges 6:2; 1 Samuel 13:6).

When the prophet Isaiah prophesied about the "day of Jehovah", he explained that **people will hide in caves because of fear of the Lord.** He wrote:

"The lofty eyes of man shall be humbled, and the pride of man shall be bowed down; but Jehovah, He alone, will be exalted in that day. For the day of Jehovah of hosts shall be on all the proud and lofty ones, And the idols shall completely vanish, And they shall go into the caves of the rocks, and into the holes of the earth, for fear of Jehovah, and from the glory of His majesty: when He rises up to make the earth quake." (Isaiah 2:11,12, 18,19).

The book of Revelation relates something similar to this prophecy of Isaiah:

*“And the kings of the earth, and the great ones, and the commanders, and the powerful ones, and every slave, and every freeman hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains. And they said to the mountains and to the rocks, *Fall on us, and hide us from the face of the One sitting on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, because the great day of His wrath has come; and who is able to stand?*” (Revelation 6:15-17).*

Today, there are many people who, like the Jehovah’s Witnesses, have not developed a personal relationship with God, because they do not know the True Jesus of the Bible who is God over all and blessed forever (Romans 9:5; Greek text), and **they live in fear of God’s wrath**. This fear causes them to want to be members of various false religious organizations, which they also call “churches”, but which are not part of the true Church of the Lord Jesus. They believe that by doing so, they will be protected from the wrath of God.

Instead of looking up to God, they look up to their false religious organizations for **leadership, guidance, and salvation**. In a spiritual sense, this is like being inside **the “caves” of their religious mountains**; these people hope and have been made to believe that **if they enter and remain** in these so-called “churches” (or congregations), **they will escape God’s wrath**. In other words, they look upon these so-called “churches” as hiding places which might protect them from God. They have been brought to the point of believing that if they remain outside these “caves”, God will consider them to be wicked, and that He will destroy them. **What a sad spiritual condition and religious slavery!**

f) **The “rocks of the mountains”**. In the foregoing prophecy of Revelation 6:15-17, we met a new symbol: **the “rocks”**. Some might say that there is nothing spiritual about the rocks mentioned here. They might think that the people will ask the actual rocks to fall on them and crush them, because they would prefer to be killed by the rocks rather than by God. But John did not write anything to this effect. He clearly stated the reason these people ask the rocks to fall on them: **It was for the purpose of hiding them from God, of protecting them not to kill them**. Therefore, what do the **“rocks of the mountains”** symbolize? Why would people seek refuge under them?

The **“rock”** can be a symbol of the True God of the Bible, or of false gods whether these so-called gods are spirit-beings, objects, or humans in exalted positions. Let’s examine a few scriptures that refer to God or to Christ as the **“rock”**. In 1 Corinthians 10:4, we read that **Christ is the rock**. There it says:

“And all drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank of the spiritual rock following --- and that rock was Christ.”

The Psalmist said to God,

“I love You, O Jehovah, my strength. Jehovah is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer. My God, my rock, I seek refuge in Him.” (Psalm 18:1,2. Also, read Deuteronomy 32:4; 1 Samuel 2:2; Psalms 18:31).

About the false gods, Deuteronomy 32:37 asks, ***“... Where are their gods, the rock in which they sought refuge?”***

Men of authority can also be “gods” to others, as Moses was a “god” to Pharaoh (Exodus 7:1). Therefore, **religious leaders, people upon whom others look for protection from God, can be symbolized by the “rocks”**.

From the above I realized that those who do not develop a personal relationship with God, hope that their religious organizations which exercise kingly authority over them (the “mountains”), their “churches” (the “caves” of the “mountains”), and their false “gods” (the “rocks” of their religious “mountains”, in other words, **their religious leaders**), will protect them from the wrath of the true God! **What a false hope!**

At this point, I realized that the time had arrived for me to begin developing this precious personal relationship with my Creator. **It was time for me to trust Him as the Rock of my Salvation.** It was time to learn that the name “Watchtower Bible and Tract Society” **could not save me.** The name of a spiritual “mountain” or a “cave” cannot save me because “... *there is salvation in no other One, for neither is there any other name under Heaven having been given among men by which we must be saved.*” (Acts 4:12) And this name is “**Jesus**” --- which means: “**YHWH the Savior**”. Jesus is the One who shed His blood on the cross for me. **No religious organization and none of the religious leaders ever died on the cross on my behalf in order to save me from my sins and to give me eternal life!**

g) **The “tunnel”**. At the back of the cave, I saw the entrance to a **tunnel**. This underground passage was supposed to be **the only “way”** that would lead me to the desirable country which I felt that was my home.

No secret or **underground** “**passage**” can lead me to the desirable place which is called “**Heavenly Jerusalem**” or “**Jerusalem from above**” (Galatians 4:26). **She is our Mother** --- not the religious organization of an earthly publishing house! The Jerusalem above is free and her children are enjoying freedom. The “children” of the Watchtower Society, on the other hand, are “**slaves**”, who do not even enjoy freedom of speech (Galatians 5:1).

No organization is “**the way**” which can lead us to God. Jesus said, “... **I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life.** ***No one comes to the Father except through Me***” (John 14:6).

I feel guilty and miserable when I remember that we, as Witnesses of Jehovah, were preaching that our organization was the “**Truth**” and our “**Mother**”. **What blasphemy!**

The tunnel of my vision had very little light; it appeared to be the yellowish light from a very small light bulb. Jesus, the only true Way, said: “... **I am the Light of the world;** ***he following Me will in no way walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life.***” (John 8:12). **The light of a small man-made light bulb cannot be compared with the dazzling brightness of the true Light of the world, neither can it give life.**

h) The statue of Mercury. Then, I saw a **statue** standing at the entrance of the cave, **facing north**. My fellow Witnesses were kneeling before it and worshipping it. Because of their disgusting idolatry, my spirit became very upset. This part of the vision reminded me of the vision of the prophet Ezekiel --- the one he described in his book, chapter 8, and verses 3-5. Let us read it:

“He stretched out the shape of a hand. And he caught me by the hair on my head. The spirit lifted me up between the earth and the sky. He took me in the visions of God to Jerusalem. He took me to the entrance to the north gate ... where the idol was that caused God to be jealous ... Then God said to me, human being, now look toward the north.’ So, I looked up toward the north ... The idol that caused God to be jealous was in the entrance.”

The similarity between the two visions (Ezekiel’s and mine), is striking. I, like Ezekiel, **had also seen a jealousy-causing idol, and it was standing at the entrance of the cave facing north.**

Why is it called an *“idol of jealousy”*? Because it takes the worship away from God and this causes God to be jealous. One of the Ten Commandments God gave to Moses, said:

“You must not make for yourselves any idols. Don’t make something that looks like anything in the sky above or on the earth below or in the water below the land. You must not worship or serve any idol. This is because I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God.” (Exodus 20:4,5).

“How is it possible,” I thought, “for my brothers and sisters to be guilty of idolatry? In our Kingdom Halls we do not have any idols, or any images or statues. What kind of idolatry are they guilty of? Why are they worshipping **Mercury**?”

Who was Mercury or Hermes in ancient times? “**Mercury**” is the Roman name and “**Hermes**” is the Greek name of the same god. What kind of a god was he? What was his function?

Everyone knows that Mercury was **the messenger of the gods, the apostle of the gods, and the leader of speech**. When the apostle Paul performed a miracle in Lystra, the people who saw the miracle said, *“The gods have become like men! They have come down to us”*. And they called Barnabas, Paul’s companion, *“Zeus”*, and Paul *“Hermes”* **because Paul was the main speaker** (Acts 14:11,12).

What did the statue of Mercury, in my vision, symbolize? To give an accurate answer, we must consider the following questions:

- a) **Who**, according to our JW belief, was **the main speaker of God’s word**?
- b) Who, according to our belief, **was receiving the spiritual food from above in order to pass it onto us**?
- c) Who appears before us as **the modern day “messenger” of God**?
- d) Who claims to be **appointed by God to give us the “new light” or the “new truths” at the right time**?

The answer is clear: **The Organization!**

As I see it today, the Witnesses have replaced, in their vocabulary, the word **“Godhead”** with the word **“Organization”**! As the true Christians love the Godhead, so the Witnesses love the **“Organization”**! As the true Godhead is composed of three Persons, Father, Son, Holy Spirit, so the

“**Organization**” of the Witnesses is made up of the following three entities:

- a) **The Governing Body** (of the publishing house “The Watchtower”);
- b) the “**Faithful and Discreet Slave Class**”; and
- c) the publishing house called, “**The Watchtower**”.

As the true Christians worship the Three Persons of the Godhead, so the Witnesses worship the above “**organizational trinity**”. As Christians prefer to die rather than to deny any of the Three Persons of the Godhead, likewise, the Witnesses prefer to die rather than to deny any part of their “**triune organization**”.

The “**trinity**” of the Witnesses of Jehovah demands from its faithful followers **COMPLETE SUBJECTION** --- and it is given to it. The organization trains its faithful followers to subject themselves to it, as one subjects himself to God.

Also, the “**trinity**” of the Witnesses demands **COMPLETE OBEDIENCE**, and it is given to it. Its faithful followers obey it as one obeys God. Whatever the organization tells its followers to believe, they accept it without objection, even if it is not in harmony with the written word of God. The faithful followers of the organization will preach it from house to house, even if what they are told goes against the Bible and all logic.

The statements I make are not fanciful or exaggerated. Let me give you an example; please pay attention to **the dates** in the following example:

The book of Revelation, in chapter 11, speaks about “*two witnesses*”, who will prophesy for a period of one thousand, two hundred and sixty days. It also says that when these “*two witnesses*” finish giving their testimony, the “*beast that ascends from the bottomless pit*” will make war with them, it will conquer them and will kill them.

The organization of the Witnesses explains the foregoing prophecy in their book “**Revelation**”. On pages 164-166, they explain that these “*two witnesses*” of the prophecy, were the Witnesses of Jehovah of the period **1914 -- 1918 A.D.** (paragraph 12).

On pages 167 and 168, they claim that the part of the prophecy, which states that “*the beast that ascends from the bottomless pit*” will conquer and kill the “*two witnesses*”, **was fulfilled in 1918**, when “responsible ministers of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society were imprisoned.” (Paragraph 21)

On page 247, paragraph 5, they assert that the “*beast*” of the above prophecy was the organization of the “League of Nations”, which was founded on the **10th of January, 1920**.

In the same paragraph they explain that the “*beast*”, the League of Nations, **fell into the abyss**, that bottomless pit, because it ceased to exist **in 1942**.

On page 248, paragraph 6, they say that **the beast came out** of the bottomless pit on **June 26th, 1945**, with the name “United Nations”.

Now, according to the prophecy, the “**two witnesses**” were to be killed by the beast which comes out of the abyss. In other words, if the explanation given by the Watchtower Society about the beast were correct, the United Nations should have put them to death **some time after June 26th, 1945**, when, as they say, it came out of the abyss.

My questions are:

- a) How could the “*beast which comes out of the abyss*” kill the “*two witnesses*” in **1918 A.D.**, since, according to their explanation, the “*beast*” did not come out of the “*abyss*” until **1945 A.D.**?
- b) How could the “*beast*” kill the two Witnesses in **1918 A.D.**, since **IT DID NOT EVEN EXIST** in that year? Did they not tell us that the League of Nations came into existence in **1920 AD**? I wonder, did the beast kill them **in advance**, two years before it even existed? **How foolish!!!**

I’m sure that the following words of the apostle Paul could certainly apply to the “teachers” of the Witnesses:

“Just as Jannes and Jambres were against Moses, these people are against the truth. They are people whose thinking has been confused. They have failed in trying to follow the faith. But they will not be successful in what they do. Everyone will see that they are foolish ...” (2 Timothy 3:8,9).

And yet, all the followers of the Watchtower Society will accept the foregoing foolishness and with pride, preach it to the unlearned! They are so filled with fear of being disfel-

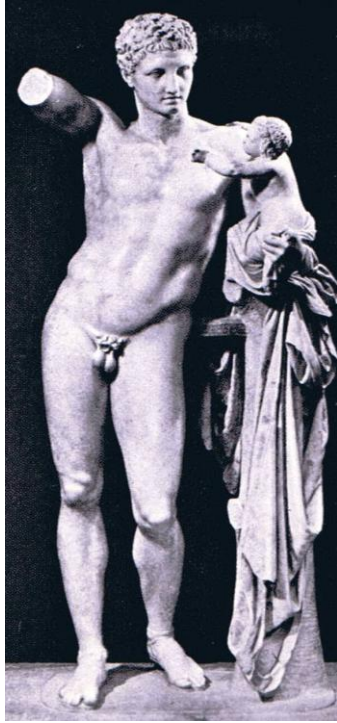
lowshipped that they will not disagree or ask questions if they have honest doubts. **Their obedience to the organization is complete.** The Bible clearly states that **obedience is better than sacrifice** (1 Samuel 15:22) and in Romans 6:16 it says, *“you are slaves of the one whom you obey”* Therefore, **the Witnesses’ complete religious obedience to their organization, makes them true slaves of it!**

The words “slave”, “servant”, and “worshipper” are synonymous. The Greek word for “worship” is “λατρεία” (Latria) and comes from the noun “λάτρις” (latris), which means a “servant”. To worship someone means to be a servant or a slave to that person. Thus, **the perfect religious obedience and devotion the Witnesses offer to their organization, constitutes idolatry!!!** And because their organization appears to their eyes as the only messenger of God, the Witnesses are guilty of worshipping a present-day copy of the false god Mercury!!!

OTHER OBSERVATIONS:

a) In the vision which God gave me, I noticed that those who were in the cave of idolatry could not see the majestic splendor of God’s sovereignty. I was able to see it because I was outside, standing on the sand of the seashore. The only thing they were able to see before them was the lifeless statue of Mercury; and, unfortunately, because they had willingly subjected themselves to the authority of the priest of Mercury, **they were forced** to worship it!

b) Then I observed that those who were in the cave were standing on the man-made, ceramic tiles. They were not standing on the natural sand of the seashore. **Those who worship idols are not part of Abraham’s seed.**



c) One day, I decided to draw and paint a picture of the above vision, which became the cover picture of this book. Before I drew the statue of Mercury, I opened the encyclopedia to find a picture of it. When I found it and looked at it carefully, I had a surprise. I noticed a detail which I had not seen before: The statue of Mercury by Praxiteles has its right arm and shoulder raised and the left one lowered. Praxiteles' statue of Mercury which I had seen in my vision **was reversed!** It had its left arm and shoulder raised and the right lowered.

At first sight, the statue I saw in the vision **deceived me**. It was so easy for someone who looked at it to be deceived and to believe that it was the statue of Mercury. Likewise, the organization of the Witnesses of Jehovah, posing as **God's messenger**, has deceived many people. But from the reversed statue of Mercury, I realized that **it is not!** God does not need to send an organization, especially that of the Witnesses which is **a proven false prophet**, to guide His children into all truth, because He guides them with His Holy Spirit (John 14:26). (For more details on their false prophecies, read Appendix A).

Dear Friend, if you are a Witness, I would advise you not to believe the words of the Watchtower Society which has claimed that, in our days, God does not operate or direct the believers by means of the Holy Spirit (“Preservation”, page 203; The Watchtower, Sept. 1, 1930, page 263; 1931 Yearbook of the International Bible Students Association, Daily Texts and Comments, February 17). **It is a satanic lie!** Jesus said that the Holy Spirit **will be in and with** the believers **forever** (John 14:16, 17). Do not allow them to disarm you from the power of the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, you will never see their deceit. Ask Jehovah God, in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, to guide you with His Holy Spirit and He will (Luke 13:13).

If you have become a Witness of Jehovah because you were searching for the truth, do not allow religious fear to prevent you from recognizing the One who is the Truth. Remember, to the One sitting on the throne **and to Jesus** belongs the total subjection, the total obedience and devotion, as well as the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the power, both now and to the day of eternity (Revelation 5:13,14). **A man-made organization of a publishing house is not worthy to receive the things which rightfully belong only to God and to Christ!**

d) Finally, I would like to mention one more thing. In my vision, I saw certain people who worshipped the idol of jealousy. But in the last part of the vision, I saw them silently walking away from that idolatrous cave. In God’s due time, even this event was fulfilled. I pray to God that He will guide their steps towards the True Good Shepherd (compare Psalm 23:1 with John 10:11).

May the Name of the Lord be blessed, both now and forever, for the understanding He gave me. Through this understanding, He brought freedom to me and to my family from the oppressive religious captivity of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. I hope that it will bring freedom also to those who read it.

Dear friend, are you at the present time in religious captivity as I was? Has your religious organization set up an idol of jealousy before you and you feel pressured to admire and obey it? Do you feel trapped in a “corral” with tall stone walls and wish you were free? If you do, be assured that freedom is available to all who want it and it is very easy to obtain --- just follow Jesus, the Good Shepherd!

Some, who think that being in the “Mother Organization” is the same as being “in Christ”, have asked me: “If someone runs away from the captivity of the ‘Mother Organization’, is there not a danger that he will also run away from Jesus?”

The answer to the above question is “NO!” A person who truly loves the Lord Jesus, a person who is truly born again because he/she recognizes Him as his/her God (John 20:28), will never run away from Him. Jesus delivered me from my “Mother Organization,” and I never ran away from Him. On the contrary, He brought me closer to Himself and He gave me the honor to know Him! The confusion lies in the fact that many people have associated the “**Shepherd**” with the “**Mother**” and feel that those two are inseparable. In the next chapter, I shall try to clear up any confusion you may have on this subject, and to show you that **there is a great difference between those two.**

Chapter Seven

The Shepherd versus the “Mother”

a) The Shepherd

In one of His parables, the Lord Jesus likened Himself to a **Shepherd**, and those who follow Him to **sheep**. In this parable He also said:

“... the sheep hear his voice (the voice of the shepherd), and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” (John chapter 10).

When Jesus said that He calls His sheep by their own name, I realized that a **personal relationship** must exist between Him and them. As a Witness of Jehovah, I believed that such a relationship was impossible. I was taught that God will not bother Himself with individuals, because He guides us as a group through our “**mother organization**”.

When Jesus said that the Shepherd “*leads them out*”, and “*brings them out*”, what did He mean? From where does the Shepherd lead the sheep? Not from the corral? Yes indeed! And what happens after they come out? He goes be-

fore them and they follow Him. Where does He lead them? To green pastures. For what reason? So they can feed. This is exactly what my Shepherd did for me. When I was in the corral of the Watchtower, He called me by name, and I came out to Him. Then, He walked in front of me and I followed. I was sure He would lead me to green pastures (Psalm 23:1-3). He would feed me the food He wanted me to have, according to my spiritual needs. His food is eternal and true; it does not change from time to time through a so-called “**new light**”, neither does it go moldy or outdated like the “**food**” of the “**Mother Organization**”.

My Shepherd would not entrust me or any of His sheep into the hands of a so-called “**Mother Organization**” to feed them. Instead, He said: “... *if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will go into him, and I will dine with him, and he with Me.*” (Revelation 3:20).

Over the years, some people have asked me, “How can someone be sure that the voice he hears is the voice of Jesus?” Some Jehovah’s Witnesses have asked me, “How could you be sure that the Lord was the One who brought you out of the corral of the organization? How did you know it was not the Devil?” My answer is, “When the Good Shepherd calls one of His sheep by name, the sheep immediately recognizes His voice because it is the voice of his/her Creator! Even the dead in the tombs will hear and recognize the voice of the Son of God when He will command them to rise” (John 5:25-29).

Many true Christians have heard, recognized and accepted the call of the Lord. They rejoice in the personal relationship they have with Him. The way they live their lives reflects the life of Christ, for His glory. But, why have mil-

lions of people who call themselves “Christians” failed to give glory to Christ by their everyday actions? Why have they failed to experience God? Let’s consider the following:

b) The “Mother”

From the moment of his birth, man begins to receive his mother’s care. The mother will **feed** the baby, **wash** it, **dress** it, **teach** it, **train** it, and **protect** it. The mother is a child’s first love. Even when the child grows up it retains the love for its mother.

When humans gather to create a group, whether the group is political or religious, before long, they love the group to the extent that they call it “**mother**”. For instance, the Greeks call their country “Mother Greece”, the Russians call their country “Mother Russia”, the Witnesses of Jehovah call their religious organization “**Mother Organization**”, and some religious groups which have not developed a personal relationship with the Lord, call their religious organization “**Mother Church**”.

Psychologically, it is very hard for humans to reject their mother and to walk away from her. For this reason, the leaders of some “Christian” groups, promote the “**Mother**” image, hoping that their followers will remain loyal to this image and will continue to give it their support. Through this process, they have created **an idol** in the minds of their adherents. Because this idol is called “**Mother**”, it is only natural for her “**children**” to look up to her for “**food**”, **leadership**, **training**, and above all, **protection!**

For many people it is easier to follow something visible than something invisible --- the bigger and fancier that

something is, the more people it attracts. The **“Mother Organization”** or the **“Mother Church”** is tangible and visible. To a person who follows the **“Mother”**, it is not necessary to exercise faith to believe that **“she”** exists, neither is it necessary to develop a personal relationship with the Lord. This person is confident that the **“Mother”** will look after all his needs, **including the salvation of his soul**. This situation **“cripples”** one’s personal relationship with God and for this reason, there are millions of churchgoers who have never experienced God.

Jesus, on the other hand, is invisible. When He calls someone to follow Him, the person must exercise **faith** and **trust** and must develop **a personal relationship with Him**. The relationship generates a personal responsibility. For this reason, those who follow the **Shepherd** are always a minority compared to those who follow the **“Mother”**.

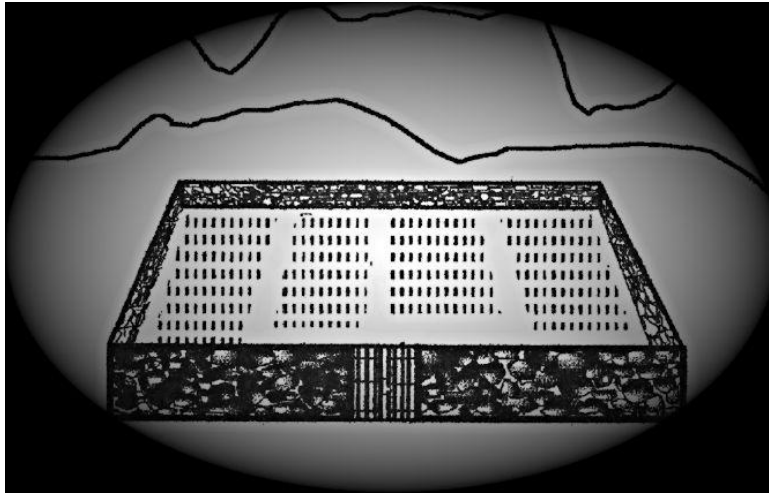
When I was a follower of the **“Mother Organization”**, I claimed that **I belonged to her**; when I became a follower of the Good Shepherd, I realized that I must belong to Him because He is the One who **bought me** with His own blood. It was He who died on the cross for me --- not the **“Mother Organization”** or the **“Mother Church”**. The **“Mother”** of those who follow the Good Shepherd is not the imaginary idol of an earthly religious organization, but the Jerusalem from above (Galatians 4:26, 31).

During the time I followed the **“Mother”**, she led me into a **“corral” of bitter and hopeless captivity**. When the good Shepherd called me by name, He brought me out of the **“corral”** and led me to Himself and to sweet freedom. Whom do you follow in your life?

c) The dream about the religious corral

The idea of a religious corral was given to me by the Spirit of the Lord through the following dream:

“I was in a corral. The corral was built on the side of a tall mountain. The stone fence that surrounded it was about three meters high.



There, I saw many false religious groups which call themselves “Christian”. Each group was lined up in rows like armies, separated from each other by narrow walkways. All the groups were facing north.

I did not belong to any of these groups; therefore, I was free to walk among them, observing them and listening to the things they said.

On my left, I saw the army of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. I heard them shout in unison,

“We are the true Christians! We are the true Christians!”

As soon as the group on my right heard the Jehovah’s Witnesses shouting these words, they became upset and yelled loudly:

“We are the true Christians! We are the true Christians!”

When the other groups heard them, they became upset, and they all began to yell:

“We are the true Christians! We are the true Christians!”

I was astonished by the great noise! I walked away, leaving them alone in their pride, to argue and to fight with their empty words which cannot prove that one is born again.

Jesus said that unless a person is born again, he/she will not see the Kingdom of God. Those who are not born again cannot have a personal relationship with Jesus, **neither can they be inside His true “corral” which is His hand** (John 10:7,9,26-28). Instead, they dwell in a man-made religious corral of bitter captivity.

The vision of the religious corral revealed to me that there are more groups besides the Jehovah’s Witnesses which can enslave. These religious organizations turn their members into fanatics and make them believe that they alone are the only true Christians on the planet, ignoring the fact that one cannot be a Christian unless the Spirit of God indwells him/her. The fanaticism of these false Christians has

brought hate, division, persecution and even death to those who worshipped Christ outside the walls of their religious “corral”.

These groups are also guilty of the fact that they have made their members believe that they alone will be saved as a group, and that outside of their group, there is no salvation. This false teaching turns the hope **for salvation** towards the group (that is, the organization). The religious institution that upholds this teaching takes the place of Christ and thus becomes guilty of blasphemy! The Bible says that salvation is received individually by the person who believes that Jesus is God’s only begotten Son, a title which necessitates Deity (John 3:16; 5:18; 20:31). In John 3:16 we read,

“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

The expression *“Whosoever believes in him ... have eternal life”*, points to a personal and individual salvation. Even the fact that one is a member of a Christian group will not save him **if he does not personally believe in Jesus who is God over all and blessed forever** (Romans 9:5; Greek text).

The idea of personal and individual **salvation** is supported by the following words of the Lord:

“Two men will be in the field, one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.” (Matthew 24:40,4 1).

Also, in the book of Revelation, we observe that although the letters were written to the Churches, the following words are directed to **individuals**:

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.” (Revelation 2:7,11,17,26,29; 3:6,13,20-22).

When I talk to others about the corral of religious captivity, people often ask me sincerely if I am a Church hater. My answer is “NO!” Jesus Christ is my Lord and my God. He is the Head of His Church, and I am part of it. How can I hate the Church of my God? But I know where the confusion lies. Most people confuse the word “**Church**” with the word “**religion**”. These two words are not synonymous. I shall discuss them in the next chapter.

Chapter Eight

The Church versus Religion

The Church --- the Body

The English word “**church**” comes *from* the Greek word *kyriakos* --- *kyriake* (supply doma, house) the Lord’s house from **kyriakos**, belonging to the Lord or Master; *kyrios*, lord, master (Webster’s Dictionary, 1958, page 324).

The Greek speaking Christians use the word “**Ecclesia**” (*ἐκκλησία*), the word the Lord Jesus Christ used, as it is recorded in Matthew 16:18, of the Greek text. The word “Ecclesia” is composed of the words “*Ἐκ*” (out) and “*καλέω-ώ*” (*kaleo*: I call, I invite). The word “**Ecclesia**” literally refers to the group of those who have been **called out**. It points to **the work of the “Shepherd”** of John 10:3.

The founder of the Christian Church is the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 16:18). The first people who became part of that Church were the apostles and His disciples. Later, on the day of Pentecost, approximately three thousand souls were added, and to this day, the Lord continues to add to His Church those who respond to His call (Acts 2:11, 41,47).

The apostle Paul explained that all the members of the Church together comprise “**a body**” --- the Body of Christ

(Colossians 1:24; Ephesians 1:23; 1 Corinthians 12:14,18, 20,27). Furthermore, Paul wrote that God “set the members each one of them, in the body, even as He desired.” (1 Corinthians 12:18). He also said, “... *God placed some in the church: firstly apostles, secondly prophets; thirdly teachers; ...*”, as well as evangelists and pastors “*with a view to the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ ...*” (1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 4:11,12).

Every human body has a head. The apostle Paul compares the human body to the “Body” of Christ. He explains that Jesus is the Head of the body in other words, the Head of the Church (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23).

The Lord Jesus loved His Body, His Church, and “*gave Himself up on its behalf, that He might sanctify it, that He might present it to Himself as the glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such things; but that it be holy and without blemish.*” (Ephesians 5:25-27).

All those who are part of the Church of Christ, subject themselves to Him (Ephesians 4:24). They do not accept as their head an imaginary “**Mother Church**” or “**Mother Organization**”, because they themselves are the one and only true Church. **The true Church of Christ is not a “Mother”, but it has a “Mother”: The Jerusalem from above** (Galatians 4:26,31).

Any earthly institution which poses as an imaginary “Mother Church” is an abominable idol, and guilty of blasphemy. The members of the Church of Christ do not operate by the laws and regulations of an earthly religious organization, but by the Spirit of Christ who indwells them.

They are children of God and have not received a spirit of slavery (Romans 8:9-17).

Authority

The word “authority” in the Greek Scriptures is “ἐξουσία” (exousia). It is a word that refers to ability, privilege, capacity, freedom, power, etc. In this part of my book, I would like to compare it with the Greek word “κατεξουσιάζω” (cat-ex-oo-see-ah-zo) which means “**to have full privilege over**”, “**to exercise authority**”, and explain how these two words are to be applied in the Church according to Scripture.

As I stated previously, the Lord Jesus Christ placed in His body some to be apostles, some to be prophets, others to be teachers, some to be pastors, and others to be evangelists, for the perfecting of the saints, for the building up of His body. To the prophet, the Lord gave “**authority**”, that is the **ability or the power to prophesy**; to the teacher He gave “**authority**”, that is **the capacity or the power to teach**; to the pastor He gave the “**authority**”, that is, **the privilege of shepherding**. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, **never gave them permission to “κατεξουσιάζω”, that is, to exercise authority over His flock as lords**. On the contrary, He called His disciples and told them:

“... You know that the rulers of the nations exercise lordship over them, and the great ones exercise authority (κατεξουσιάζω) over them. But it will not be so among you. But whoever desires to become great among you let him be your servant. And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave; even as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve; and to give His life a ran-

som for many.” (Matthew 20:25-28; Mark 10:42-45. Also, read Appendix D.)

When a man (or the central body of a group of believers) lifts himself up and begins to exercise authority over the flock, “κατεξουσιάζω”, history has proven many times that they become “**wicked**”, and they “**beat**” their fellow servants. Jesus said that when He returns, He will cut those “wicked” servants in two, and He will place them with the hypocrites; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matthew 24:48-51).

In agreement with the foregoing, the apostle Peter wrote:

“The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.” (1 Peter 5:1-4).

The Greek verb “**υποτάσσω**” (pronounced epotasso) means to subordinate, to obey, put under, subdue unto, be subject to, be in subjection to, submit self unto. This word appears in the Greek New Testament of the Bible forty times. **The Church of Jesus Christ subjects itself under the Headship of Christ only** (Ephesians 5:24).

The Bible encourages those who make up the Church to submit themselves one to another as a gesture of humility of mind --- but it does not say anywhere that they should

submit themselves under the lordship of an apostle, or a prophet, or a teacher, or a pastor, or an elder (1 Peter 5:5; Ephesians 5:21). Their function in the Church (of those who hold any of the above **positions of service**) should basically be, **to feed and to uphold the flock of God --- not to rule over it. The flock is not theirs but God's** (1 Peter 5:2; Ephesians 4:12; John 21:15-17; Acts 20:28). What right does any man or institution have, to lift himself or itself up and to “beat” or even **kill** one of the sheep of the Good Shepherd just because it subjects itself to Jesus only? What right does anyone have to remove from a “sheep” the freedom to worship God in Spirit and Truth and instead force the sheep to follow them? The apostle Paul said: *“I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them”* --- instead of encouraging them to follow Jesus (Acts 20:29, 30).

Religion

The word “**religion**” appears four times only in the Greek text of the New Testament, and there is no connection with the Church of Christ whatsoever. The English word “**religion**” means “**to bind back**” (with God). After Adam’s fall, mankind was alienated from God; we became enemies of God because of sin. Religion is powerless to remove sin and to bind us back to God. The One who has made this possible is Jesus.

The Greek word for “**religion**” is “**θησκεία**” (threskiah) which means “**ceremonial observance**”. The word “**θησκεία**” comes from the word “**θησκος**” (threskos) which means “**ceremonious in worship**” (as demonstrative) that is, pious: --- religious. Both Greek words are derived from

the word “**θροέω**” (throeo) which means “**I yell, I shout, I impart fear**”. The word “**θροέω**” comes from the verb “**θρέομαι**” (threomai) which again means “**to wail**”, “**to clamour**”, that is, by implication, “**to frighten**”.

From ancient times, religion has imparted fear into mankind --- fear of the supernatural, of what different cultures have called God or gods. Through that fear, religion has managed to control and to manipulate the masses in order to prosper and, in some cases, to become exceedingly wealthy.

Throughout human history, Religion, like a glamorous lady, has sat on a throne and ruled over people like a queen. Those who loved her are those who prospered from her, i.e. Kings, merchants, and the “captains” who have “ships” in the “sea” that carry those who “work the sea”.

These expressions are found in the book of Revelation, chapters 17 and 18. In these two chapters, John talks, among other things, about a specific religion. He describes her as a great harlot who is dressed in fanciful clothes and who is seated upon “many waters”. Let’s read his words:

“Then one of the seven angels ... came and said to me. ‘Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who is seated upon many waters ... and I saw a woman ... The woman was arrayed in purple and scarlet, and bedecked with gold and jewels and pearls ...” (Revelation 17:1-4).

In verse 15 of chapter 17, the angel explained to John,

“The waters that you saw, where the harlot is seated, are people and multitudes and nations and tongues.”

In Revelation 17:5 he called her,

“MYSTERY, BABYLON THE GREAT, MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF EARTH’S ABOMINATIONS”.

Then, John makes her responsible for the shed blood of the prophets and of the saints, and of the martyrs of Jesus (Chapter 17:6 and 18:24).

In Revelation 17:1,16,17; 18:2,8-10,20; and 19:2, the angel shows that **God is against her**, that He will judge and destroy her.

In Revelation 18:11-13 John says that the merchants will weep and mourn for her destruction because no one buys their cargo anymore, **things which are used in religious ceremonies**. Some of these are gold, silver, jewels, pearls, silk, all kinds of scented wood, marble, incense, myrrh, frankincense, wine, oil, fine flour, wheat, and human souls.

In Revelation 18:17-19, the angel says that the “captains who have ships in the sea” will also mourn for her, and so will the sailors, and as many as work the sea, and the company on the ships.

Who are symbolized by the “captains” on the “ships”? What do the “ships” symbolize? How does one “work the sea”?

Earlier, we learned that the “sea” symbolizes the unbelieving and wicked ones in mankind --- those who are away

from God. The will of the Lord Jesus for His followers is to **“work the sea”** like fishers of men (Matthew 4:18,19; Luke 5:10). Speaking in a parable, Jesus said,

“... the kingdom of heaven is like a net which was thrown into the sea and gathered fish of many kinds; when it was full, men drew it ashore and sat down and sorted the good into vessels but threw away the bad. So it will be at the close of the age. The angels will come out and separate the evil from the righteous and throw them into the furnace of fire; there men will weep and gnash their teeth.” (Matthew 13:47-50).

So then, when a follower of Christ becomes a **“fisher of men”**, it is like he “works the sea”; **he is doing this by preaching to the unbelievers the things of God, having their salvation as a goal.**

Through visions, which I will describe in later chapters, the Lord has revealed to me that the “ships” symbolize organized churches. As a ship has a captain, so also an organized church has an overseer. As a ship has sailors who assist the captain in the operation of the boat, likewise, an organized church has other elders and deacons who assist the overseer or pastor. As a ship carries a group of passengers, likewise, a church has a congregation of churchgoers. As a ship is in the sea but is not part of it, likewise a true Christian Church is in the “sea” of the world but is not supposed to be part of it (John 17:14-16). This symbolism of a “ship” can also be applied to Revelation 8:9, where it says that one third of the ships were corrupted (from the Greek text).

How can a Church be corrupted?

When a group of believers becomes involved with ordinances of religious laws, falls away from the simplicity of Christ and from His gospel of freedom; they fall again into the abject slavery and satanic corruption of a different gospel -- a gospel that produces religious fear.

The fear religion has induced in mankind has caused the masses to look up to “her” for leadership and guidance. In turn, “she” offers them hope --- a way out of the false fears “she” gave them. She tells them that **IF** they stay with “her”, **IF** they love and support “her”, **IF** they give their lives for “her”, **IF** they kill for “her”, **IF** they totally obey “her”, and **IF** they follow certain rituals, which “she” will prescribe, they will:

- a) Please God.
- b) Find forgiveness.
- c) Escape God’s wrath.
- d) Find happiness through fellowship.
- e) Have eternal life.

Was “religion” ever used in the worship of the true God? Yes, it was! The Greek word for “religion” means “ceremonial observance”, therefore, all the ceremonial observances Moses prescribed to the nation of Israel constituted a religion. This fact is also manifest from the words of the apostle Paul who said, “... *after the most straight sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee*” (Acts 26:5).

But later, the same apostle said that the handwritten manuscript, which contained his past religion's ordinances, **Jesus took out of the way and nailed it onto His cross**. Let us read his words:

“And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross;” (Colossians 2:13,14).

From the above we also see that Jesus forgives all the sins of those who follow Him. The value of His blood was more than enough to pay for all the sins of the whole world for all time. For this reason, on the day of His death, all the ordinances of Moses' hand-written manuscript became void and useless; Jesus took it out of the way. The handwritten manuscript of the law and the “religion” it had created were nailed with Jesus to the cross! When Jesus was resurrected, He also resurrected His “body” --- that is, those who follow Him. But **HE DID NOT RESURRECT THE HAND-WRITTEN MANUSCRIPT, NEITHER DID HE RESURRECT THE RELIGION IT HAD CREATED!** As far as His followers are concerned, the religion which had enslaved them in the past, whichever that religion was, **HAD DIED FOREVER!** For those who followed Christ, the time had come to enjoy the sweet **freedom** without any religious fears.

Unfortunately, from the beginning of the Christian era there were men, so-called Christians, who tried to corrupt the freedom Christ gave us; they tried to enslave the body of Christ by putting them back under religious ordinances.

In his letter to Galatians, Paul wrote:

“We talked about this problem because some false brothers had come into our group secretly. They came in like spies to find out about the freedom we have in Christ Jesus. They wanted to make us slaves. But we did not agree with anything those false brothers wanted. We wanted the truth of the Good News to continue for you.” (Galatians 2:4,5).

The apostle Paul proved to be a dynamic defender of Christian freedom. He encouraged the body of Christ in Galatia with the following:

“... stand firm in the freedom with which Christ made us free, and do not again be held with a yoke of slavery.” (Galatians 5:1). And to the Colossian Church he wrote, ***“Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or drink, or in respect to an holiday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days; which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ”*** (Colossians 2:16,17).

Until the day of the Lord’s resurrection, men tried to justify themselves before God by doing the works of religious laws. But, the apostle Paul said, ***“... by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight ...”*** (Romans 3:20). And in verse 28 he concluded that ***“... a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”*** And this is true, because Jesus ***“was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”*** (Romans 4:25; Isaiah chapter 53).

The work Jesus accomplished on the cross was perfect and complete; He did not leave any blanks. When He was

nailed on the cross, He cried out “**IT IS FINISHED**” (John 19:30; 17:4). For this reason, His followers do not need a religious system of “dos” and “don’ts” to help them fill in the blanks, simply because there aren’t any.

The apostle Paul said that those who are in Christ are **complete** (Colossians 2:10). He did not say that they need the ordinances of a religion or the traditions of men to become more complete. On the contrary, he said, “*Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.*” (Colossians 2:8). And again, He said, “*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught...*” (Colossians 2:6,7).

From the above verses, we learn that the Church, the body, must walk, be rooted and built up **in the Lord Jesus --- not in religion!**

If you, Dear Reader, know the Lord Jesus Christ “*who is God over all and blessed forever*” (Romans 9:5; Greek text), and have accepted Him as your personal God and Savior, then you are part of His body. If you are in a “religion” which is pressuring you to keep “her” ordinances, such as “**Do not eat meat**”; “**Do not drink wine or coffee**”; “**Do not get married**”; “**Keep one day holier than the rest**” (see Appendix B); “**You must go from house to house**”; “**You must obey the governing body of our organization even if they teach you wrong things**” etc., then **you are in slavery**. The apostle Paul directs his question to you:

“You died with Christ and were made free from the worthless rules of the world. So why do you act as if you still belonged to this world? I mean, why do you follow rules like these: ‘Don’t eat this,’ ‘Don’t taste that,’ ‘Don’t touch that thing’? These rules are talking about earthly things that are gone as soon as they are used. They are only manmade commands and teachings. These rules seem to be wise. But they are only part of a man-made religion. They make people pretend not to be proud and make them punish their bodies. But they do not really control the evil desires of the sinful self.” (Colossians 2:20-23).

If you would like to experience the freedom that God gave to His people, then respond to the heavenly voice which cries out: *“Come out of her my people that you may not share in her sins, and that you may not receive of her plagues;”* (Revelation 18:4).

Are you afraid to come out of **“her”** because you don’t know where to go afterwards? The Holy Scriptures say, *“There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear, because fear has punishment; and the one fearing has not been perfected in love. We love Him because He first loved us.”* (1 John 4:18,19). Jesus said, *“Come to Me, all those laboring and being burdened, and I will give you rest.”* (Matthew 11:28). Place yourself into the hands of Jesus; trust Him and He will guide you. If you are looking for fellowship, ask Him to lead you to a group of people who are part of His body, who are born again, who study His word, who worship the Father in Spirit and Truth, and who are enjoying the freedom He gave us, in holiness.

Now, let us summarize:

Religion has many “churches”, but Christ has only One. The Church of Christ is not a religious institution, but is those men and women who believe and confess that He is the Son of the living God (a title which shows that He is God by nature --- John 5:18,23), and who are born again because the Spirit of God and of Christ dwells in them (Romans 8:9).

They have given up their former sinful lifestyle and have put on the “**new man**” which has been created according to God’s will in righteousness and holiness of the Truth (Ephesians 4:24).

They don’t need a religion to help them become a “**new man**” because they know that they have already become a new creation since the very moment they believed in the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

They are God’s workmanship. Religion does not have the power to improve God’s supernatural work (Ephesians 2:10).

They know that the “*pure and undefiled religion*”, mentioned by James, **is not a religious institution** which supposedly has the power to help them gain salvation, but **is the doing of their good works**. They become doers of good works because they have looked deeply into the perfect law which gives them freedom (James 1:25). They don’t become doers of good works to be saved because they know that they are already saved from the very moment they believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus, the fact they become doers of good works is one of the signs that they are saved, and the God of love indwells them. For this reason, they visit the fatherless, and the widows, and they

keep themselves unspotted from the world (James 1:27). They are the Church which is the pillar and ground of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15).

How does someone become a member of the body of the Church? The Lord explained this to me with the following dream:

The dream about the Iron Boat

I entered a room at the front of a tall building. On the opposite wall, there was a large doorway which led to an inner room. This room had no windows or other doors.

Through the doorway, I observed that there was a huge iron boat in the inner room. The boat was so long that I was unable to see its bow or stern. I saw only the part of its hull which was visible through the doorway.

The boat was obviously still under construction, but it was almost complete. The only unfinished part was an opening on the side of the hull. Jesus was the builder. I saw Him working. He was wearing a long white robe.

The opening on the side of the hull looked like a part of an unfinished jigsaw puzzle. I saw the Lord in front of the opening holding a piece of iron shaped like a piece of that puzzle with all its curves, indentations, and projections. The Lord placed it on the opening where it fitted. Miraculously, the piece of iron became one with the rest of the smooth body of the ship. Where it bonded, I could not see a seam. The Lord Jesus was not using any tools to complete His work. The construction of that ship was the miraculous work of His hands.

As soon as the Lord placed that one piece of iron on the hull of the ship to make the opening smaller, He disappeared. But He immediately reappeared inside the hull. Then He disappeared again and, in an instant, appeared in a different spot. He did this in order to inspect the part of the project which He had completed previously. Truly, He was the only Builder, the only Sustainer and the only Overseer of His work. Oh, how I longed to assist Him in the completion of His construction.

“Lord!” I called loudly to Him. He immediately appeared before me.

“Yes, Costa?” the Lord asked smiling.

“Lord,” I said, “I would very much like to help you with your work. Is there anything I can do?”

“No, Costa, you cannot help me; this is my project,” he answered.

Immediately after this conversation, the Lord disappeared again.

I walked out of the building feeling dissatisfied. “But I would really like to serve Him,” I thought. “If only I could be His servant...”

I wanted to talk to Him again. I went back into the front room of the building. But what a disappointment --- the room was empty! Jesus and His iron boat were no longer there. I did not want to leave again dissatisfied. I felt very sad and said loudly:

“Lord Jesus, I stand on my faith, and I ask you to appear before me once again. I would like to ask a favor of you.”

The Lord appeared before me immediately. He looked at me with the most loving expression and asked kindly:

“What do you wish Costa?”

“Lord,” I replied, “make me your servant”.

The Lord looked directly into my eyes and smiled. Then, He placed His right hand on my shoulder and said:

“But, Costa, you are my servant!”

Let the Name of the Lord be glorified now and forever. I thank Him because His love for us bridged the great chasm that existed between humans and Him who is the uncreated and eternal God. I thank Him because He is so humble and talks to imperfect creatures like me. I thank Him for showing me, through this vision, the work He does on His temple. He taught me that:

a) He is the only Builder of His temple. Those who believe in His Name are His project, His building (1 Corinthians 3:9).

b) He chooses His own people, and one at a time, He adds them to the body of His Church (Acts 2:47; 1 Peter 1:2; Romans 8:29). We cannot add any “piece” to the body of His project. The judgment belongs to Him. He places each member of His body at its proper place, exactly where it fits, according to His will. He knows who will function as a “foot”, or as a “hand”, or as an “eye”, or as a “mouth”, etc.

Can it be possible that all of us are “feet” (evangelists), or “hands” (those who have the gift of helping; 1 Corinthians 12:28)? Or is it possible that all of us are “eyes” (prophets), or “mouths” (teachers)?

The answer is “NO!” The apostle Paul wrote to the Christians of Corinth the following:

“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you ... Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, ... Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? (Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 and Ephesians 4:11-16).

There are churches which do not pay attention to the above truths. They place in church positions men who should not be there. They place them there because these men have some human credentials, such as coming out of a Bible school. Therefore, when a “foot” is placed by humans in the place of a “hand”, or an “eye” in the place of an “ear”, and so on, the body cannot function properly for the Lord. This body will be monstrous. Many evil things can come out of such man-appointed positions or “transplants”. In such groups the fruit of the Spirit of God, that brings glory to Jesus, is nonexistent (Galatians 5:22,23).

I tried to present to you, as clearly as possible, the differences which exist between the Church of Christ and “Religion”. My purpose was to help you decipher between good and evil (Hebrews 5:14) as the Lord showed me. In the next chapter, I will further expose that difference through two dreams which I received from the Spirit of God, the One who guides the believers, the Church, into all truth.

Chapter Nine

The “Way” versus Religion

Jesus said to His disciples,

“And you know the way where I am going’. Thomas said to Him, ‘Lord, we do not know where you are going; How can we know the way?’ Jesus said to him, ‘I am the Way, and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father, but by me.’” (John 14:4-6).

He also said,

“See that not any lead you astray ... For false christs and false prophets will arise and show great signs and wonders, so as to lead you astray, if possible, even the elect.” (Matthew 24:4,24).

From these words of Jesus, we learn that **He is the “Way”**, the **“Road”**, which leads mankind to God. On the other hand, Satan, the enemy of mankind, does everything in his power to prevent or to delay those who have decided to walk on this **“Road”**. For this reason, the apostle Peter admonishes us with the following words:

“Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls

around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith ...” (1 Peter 5:8,9). In order to resist him we must remain firm in our faith and always focus on the “**Way**” --- on “Jesus”.

Satan has managed to prevent many millions of people from walking on the “Way”. How has he accomplished it? By presenting to them a **religious system that looks Christian**, with false christs, and false prophets, mimicking the gifts God has given to the Church, and which he has placed very close and parallel to the “Road”. If the Christians who walk on the “Road” are not completely alert, if they will not fix their eyes **on the “Way”**, they can easily be side-tracked and fall into his “trap”. For this reason, the apostle Peter used the expression “*be watchful*”, and Jesus said “*See*” which means “have your eyes open”, so that no one will mislead you.

The person who falls into the religious trap of Satan, automatically loses his freedom in Christ and is bound with a yoke of slavery by keeping manmade rules (Colossians 2:16-23; Galatians 5:1).

Men, who function as leaders in Satan’s religious trap, rule as masters over the people they capture. When they capture them, they lock them up behind the walls of their organizations as one locks captured birds in cages. It is very sad to see that so many millions of people love being in this miserable condition. Because their captors feed them with dry “food”, they love the “cages” so much that they want to spend the rest of their lives in them. Instead of subjecting themselves under the Mastership of our only Master, God and Lord Jesus Christ, who brings freedom to the captives

and leads them to green pastures, they subject themselves under the rulership of men who enslave (Jude 4).

This is not a new phenomenon. A similar situation took place among the people of God in the days of the prophet Jeremiah. Let's read the words of the Almighty God from Jeremiah 5:26-31:

“For wicked men are found among my people; they lurk like fowlers lying in wait. They set a trap; they catch men. Like a basket full of birds, their houses are full of treachery; therefore, they have become great and rich, they have grown fat and sleek. They know no bounds in deeds of wickedness ... Shall I not punish them for these things? says the Lord, and shall I not avenge myself on a nation such as this? An appalling and horrible thing has happened in this land: the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule at their direction; my people love to have it so ...”

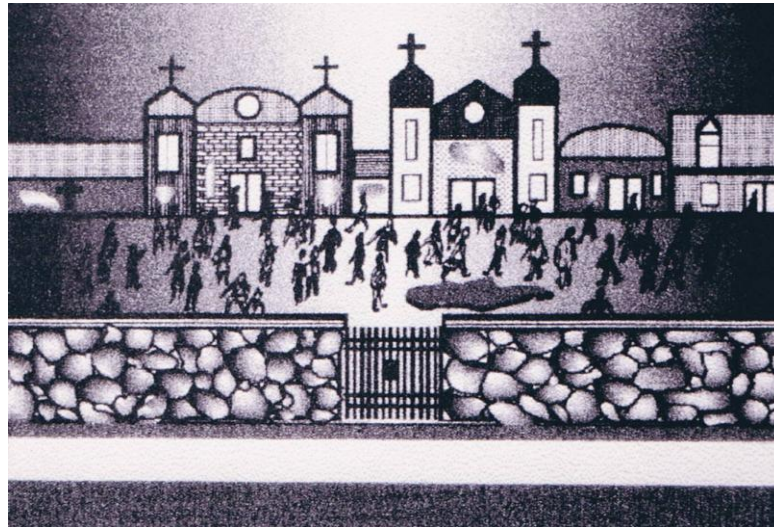
The Lord helped me realize the truthfulness of the above words through dreams. Here, I will recount two of them:

The dream about the yard of the Master-Builders

“It was late in the afternoon. I was walking eastward on a narrow, straight road which did not have any potholes or stones on which one might stumble. The sea was on my right. Suddenly, on the left-hand side of the road, I saw a tall stone wall, which was built parallel to the road and very close to it, but without touching it.

I continued walking until I was in front of a wide iron gate. I paused and looked inside where I saw a multitude of people who were hurrying back and forth. They seemed to be

very, very busy. Out of curiosity, I wanted to enter the yard and find out what kind of place it was.



I opened the gate and walked in. On the north side of the yard, I saw many different religious buildings. I observed the buildings carefully. There was no space between them; each building touched the one next to it. They all varied in height, and most were constructed of concrete and bricks. None of the structures was completely finished. I saw many imperfections.

The yard was full of men and women; I saw them working very hard. In their hands, they held building materials such as bricks, wood, and mortar. Amongst them, I saw men who were hired Master-Builders. Each of them was responsible for the construction of a specific building. They were ruling lords; they were supervising, commanding, and directing their workers.

I also observed that amongst the people there were some who looked like robot-men. Like robots, they were walking about without human feelings. These men had cold and unemotional expressions. They were spies among the workers. If any of the workers did not follow the rules of the Master-Builders exactly, the robot-men would report them and they would be punished. Thus, **out of fear, and in order to avoid embarrassment**, the workers always tried to do their best to construct the buildings.

Their going to and fro, created much confusion in the big yard. The strange thing was that although they were working hard to complete the projects, the appearance of the buildings remained imperfect.

There, amongst the crowd, I met someone I had known for many years. He was a Witness of Jehovah. I asked him to explain what was going on in the big yard. He told me that the people in the yard lived there because the Master-Builders do not allow them to leave. He also said that it is the Master-Builders who **make the people work so hard**, 'And yet', he said, 'everyone is very happy to be here'.

'How is it possible to be happy?' I asked.

'Look outside,' he answered, pointing towards the iron gate. 'Do you see those huge rocks?'

I looked out through the black iron bars of the gate at the road on which I had walked earlier, that narrow road which had no potholes or stones over which one might stumble. On the other side of the road, I saw a few huge black rocks which had not been there before.

‘Yes,’ I answered, ‘I see them.’

‘Do you hear that thunder in the sky?’ he asked.

I listened carefully. I heard something that sounded like the rolling of distant thunder. But I did not see any lightning flashes. Neither did I see any clouds in the sky. I wondered where the sound of thunder came from.

I answered, ‘Yes, I hear it’.

He continued, ‘**Away from this big yard, there is no protection.** Every time the heavens thunder, the huge rocks you see outside the iron gate fall down to the earth from the sky. These rocks can kill those who are not with us in the big yard. You see, these huge rocks can fall anywhere on the earth except in our yard. Heaven will never bring destruction here. For this reason, those who come here stay here. They do not leave this yard easily. They are happy to be here even if they must work as slaves under the yoke of the Master-Builders. They work in the yard all day, and in the evening, everyone goes to the building to which he or she belongs, to go to sleep. This way, they avoid the heavenly wrath’.

‘But’ I said ‘nothing is falling from the sky. Earlier, I was out there walking on the road, and I never saw any danger. I certainly never saw any rocks falling from the sky! I do not know where the rocks come from, but I’m sure that someone here must be playing a trick on you to profit from you. Someone is making you afraid by telling you fables. He does this to keep you locked up here, to control you and to rule over you.’

He looked at me with disbelief and wonder. He seemed to be afraid.

‘Let me prove it to you,’ I said. ‘Tonight, when everyone goes to their religious buildings to sleep, come with me outside the yard so you can find out for yourself.’

‘But’ he replied, ‘the Master-Builders have the robot-men who patrol the yard --- even at night. If one of them sees us out here in the yard, instead of sleeping in the buildings, we’ll be in big trouble.’

‘I’m not afraid of them!’ I said, ‘But listen! When the time comes for everyone to go to the dormitories, we could hide somewhere out here, and at the first opportunity we will jump out onto the straight road. What do you say?’

He agreed reluctantly. Immediately, nightfall came. The crowds began to line up to go into their dormitories. Suddenly, directly in front of the iron gate, a big hole appeared in the ground; my friend and I jumped into it to hide.

The yard emptied. Only a few robot-men patrolled the dark yard. We looked towards the iron gate, which had been left half open, and we had a big surprise. A few of the Master-Builders walked towards the huge, black rocks. We saw them lifting the rocks as if they were feathers. **The ‘rocks’ were made from painted cardboard!** The Master-Builders lifted them easily and moved them to new locations. It was easy to guess why they did that. In the morning, when the ‘**captives**’ got up and came out into the yard, they would see new huge ‘rocks’ in a different place. They would continue to believe in the fabrication that only if

they remained inside the yard would they find protection from the heavenly wrath!

As soon as the Master-Builders left, my friend and I ran away from the yard of captivity, of fear, and deceit. Running with renewed energy brought on by our personal experience, we ran from that yard where **the Master-Builders ruled as wicked lords!**"

Understanding the dream

Q. What do the Master-Builders symbolize?

A. Religious leaders. In Acts 4:1-12, we read: *“And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captains of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they arrested them and put them in custody until the morrow, for it was already evening ... On the morrow their rulers and elders and scribes ... with Annas the high priest ... and all who were of the high priestly family ... inquired, “By what power or by what name did you do this?” Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, ‘Rulers of the people and elders ... be it known to you all, and to the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified ... This is the stone which was rejected by you builders ...”*

Q. What does it mean that all the religious buildings were touching one another?

A. It means that unlike the true Church which encourages all the believers to have a personal relationship with Jesus, all the false religious groups which appear to be Christian,

have been united by Satan to serve his purpose --- to deceive, to capture, to delay, and, if it were possible, to stop those who walk on the Path called Jesus.

Q. What does it mean that some of the buildings were taller than others?

A. It means that they represent a higher number of followers, and that they are richer than others.

Q. What does it mean that the buildings were incomplete?

A. It means that all the false religious groups, which appear to be Christian, are imperfect.

Q. What does the yard with the stone wall symbolize?

A. It symbolizes the so-called “Christian” religious empire which poses as the Church. It symbolizes the religious trap which Satan has placed to deceive, if it were possible, even the elect.

Q. What do the artificial thunder and the huge, false stones symbolize?

A. They symbolize the huge false fears the religious leaders impart to those they rule over! Those who love God must learn that God loves them, and that they must not be afraid of His wrath. The apostle John wrote,

“So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as

he is so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love. We love Him because He first loved us.” (1 John 4:16-19).

Q. What do the robot-men symbolize?

A. The robot-men are those who blindly obey and subject themselves to the leadership of the various so-called Christian organizations. They help their leaders to rule over those who follow them. Without any human feelings and respect for the God of freedom, they are moved by religious zeal to serve the interests of their religious institution.

Q. What does the straight and narrow path, which is outside the stone-walled yard, symbolize?

A. The Lord Jesus! He said, ***“I am the Way ... no one comes to the Father but by me.”*** (John 14:6).

Body of Christ, remember that God is the One who has called us to come to Christ (John 6:44). Thus, God is the One who has placed us on the **“Road”**. For this reason, we must remain on this **“Path”** until He brings us to God, and we will see Him face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12). **Until then, we should remain alert because Satan’s religious yard is very attractive.** Satan bombards us daily with desirable thoughts that appear to be our own, such as, “The best thing that I can do now that I am saved, is to remain inside the false religious group I grew up with, so I can help others”. Let’s not forget that the first century Pagans who came to Christ did not remain inside, neither did they

support with their presence the religion they grew up with. I'm sure they followed the admonition that was given to them, *"... come out of them and be separate from them ... and touch nothing unclean; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."* (2 Corinthians 6:15-18)

Members of the Body of Christ, who have been trapped inside Satan's religious yard, should pay special attention to the following dream:

The dream about the school yard

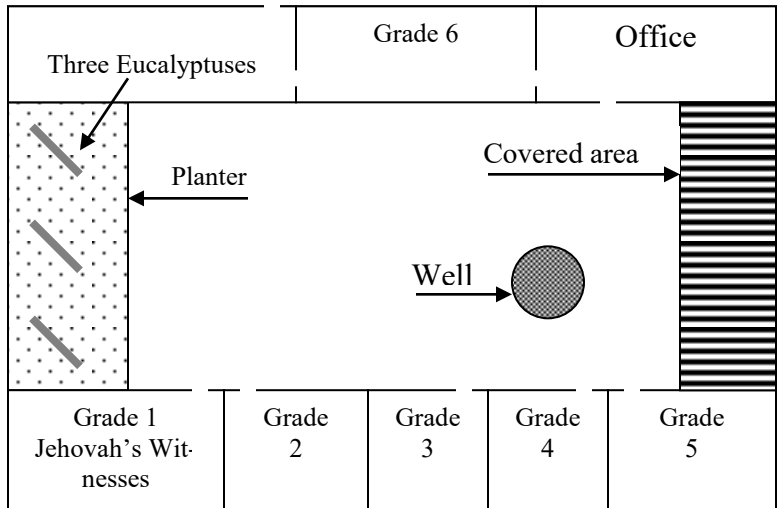
Throughout the years of my Christian walk, the Lord helped me see Satan's religious "trap" in many different ways. He helped me recognize and identify it correctly. He also showed me how "Religion" --- not the Church --- appears to be something "she" is not, to mislead the innocent. In the following vision, the Lord showed me the fatal results "she" brings to those who trust "her". Further, He revealed to me who her husband is and how he uses the members of the Body of Christ who have been trapped inside his religious "yard":

"I was standing on a narrow road facing eastward. The sea was to the right of the road. On the left, towards the north, there was a school building. The building was very close to the road, but it was not touching it.

A spark above my head caught my eye. I looked up and saw that the electric wire, which was feeding the building with power, was burning at its base on the hydro pole. Immediately, the lights of the building went out.

I opened the door and went inside. The room I entered was one of the classrooms of the school. It was filled with Jehovah's Witnesses. They looked at me but did not speak to me because I was disfellowshipped.

Directly opposite the entrance door, was another door that led to an inner yard. I went out to this yard, leaving the Witnesses behind in their darkened classroom. I observed the inner yard and the surroundings. The school had six classrooms. The classrooms had been built on the southern and northern side of the yard. The school office was located on the northern side of the yard. On the east side, there was a tall stone wall with a covered area in front of it. The covered area was to protect the students from the rain. Near the covered area I noticed a well.



The Road

On the west side, I saw another high stone wall, with a short retaining wall in front of it, creating a raised planter. In the planter, I saw three tall eucalyptus trees.

I looked up at the sky. I saw a few birds; some were doves, flying about in the grayish sky of early evening. On the ground, by the roots of the tall trees, I saw the nests of a few doves, which were taking care of their young.

Then, I looked down at the concrete floor of the yard and saw a few dead doves. I examined them carefully; the feathers and the down were in perfect condition, shaping the bodies of the doves, but I felt that there was no flesh under them. It was as if something had sucked the life and flesh out of them and left them hollowed and dry. I realized instantly that something very dangerous was present in the school yard, an enemy of the innocent doves that was killing them.

I looked at the north side of the yard. Close to the school office, I saw a hole in the stone wall of the building. The hole was about eight inches above the ground. Coming out of the hole, was the head of a small, harmless-looking snake. At the same time, the whole yard filled up with waters approximately four inches deep. The snake came out of its nest and began to swim freely on the top of the waters.

I stood on a step above the water; my feet did not get wet. Suddenly, one of my sons appeared next to me. When the little boy saw the snake, he moved towards it to play with it. I grabbed his hand to prevent him from doing so. I told him that he must be careful because it was quite possible that the snake was dangerous.

The snake did not come near us; something caused it to keep its distance from us. It turned around and headed back towards its nest. As it was entering, I noticed that the opening to the nest was getting larger. As soon as the snake entered the nest, the waters and the concrete floor of the yard disappeared. Now, the natural earth has become the floor of the yard.

Still holding the hand of my little son, we walked toward the nest of the snake. I wanted to observe it a little closer to determine whether it was dangerous. By the time we walked to the nest, I noticed that the size of its opening had increased even more. From its original diameter of about two and one half inches, it had become about twelve inches.

Carefully, I looked inside the nest. I could not believe what I saw. The snake's body was larger than when I first saw it. Its head was raised like a cobra's. Its mouth was open and I saw two sets of pointed and threatening teeth. I could tell that the snake was furious and ready to attack. Immediately, we ran away. I was glad I had not allowed my son to play with it. At this point, my son disappeared.

From a distance, I looked at the nest which was constantly becoming larger. And so was the size of the snake! It came out of its nest again. Now, it was the size of a huge anaconda. Its diameter was about twenty-four inches.

Just before its head touched the ground, part of the yard was covered with a thick layer of salt. The massive snake slowly slithered on the salt. It came close to the well, and covered itself in the salt of the earth. Only its eyes remained uncovered.

The evening progressed rapidly. All the students had gone into their classrooms to sleep.

Suddenly, three students came out of their dark classrooms and walked towards the well. They were thirsty and wanted to drink water. But unfortunately, they did not have a bucket and were unable to get a drink. I saw them standing there in front of the well, looking down into its dark depths.

I was filled with agony; because of the darkness, they were unable to see the repulsive snake, which was lurking, waiting, ready to devour them.

I yelled at them. I implored them to run away from this place. I tried to tell them about the huge, black dragon hidden in the salt of the earth. But they ridiculed me and paid no attention to my warning because when they looked around, they couldn't see the serpent. They saw only the white salt of the earth. Oh, I was so frustrated! The big serpent might devour them at any moment, and yet they paid no attention to my warnings because I was not one of their classmates. They thought I was lying.

I wanted to kill the serpent. At that moment, a garden hoe appeared in my hands. I stepped towards the serpent, the hoe in the air. The serpent looked at me cautiously. I took another step towards it, and the garden hoe shrank to the size of a little scraper. It was certainly not large enough to kill such a monster.

The serpent lifted its head sluggishly above the salt of the earth and looked at me with a sarcastic smile. Then, the rest of its body came out of the salt. It could have devoured me, but something caused it to keep its distance from me. Turn-

ing around, it slithered towards its nest. Now, the width of the nest's opening was as large as the entrance to a cave.

An eerie silence and darkness encompassed the yard. The night had progressed. I thought of injuring the snake from behind as it was entering its cave. I approached it slowly. As I got closer, I noticed some green grass and weeds on the earth. Standing on the grass was a grayish-black female dove. I looked at it carefully; the hair on the back of my neck stood up. Where the feet of the bird were supposed to be, I saw the black body of a snake!

Immediately, I understood that this female snake-dove was responsible for the death of the innocent doves. The presence of the female dove in the yard was attracting them to come down, to build their nests by the roots of the tall trees. To them, the school yard looked like a very safe place to raise their young. But, unfortunately, **the snake-dove that looked so innocent, so harmless to them** (because they could not see her hidden body), **was feeding on them**. I remembered their bodies, hollow, dry, and lifeless, lying on the concrete floor of the school yard!

'The poor and innocent doves ...' I thought; and I decided to kill the snake-dove. But, before I made a move, I noticed that the snake-dove was rapidly becoming larger.

Suddenly, a red light filled the dark yard. The light came from the cave of the first big serpent. I looked towards the cave, and I saw that its opening had increased in size. It had become about six and one half feet wide and about ten feet high. Now, I saw in the cave an awe-inspiring beast. It resembled a red lion with black leopard-like spots. It stood up on its hind legs like a man and walked to the entrance of

the cave. It extended its hand towards the female snake-dove which now had the dimensions of a human being. This gesture was an invitation to her to come into the cave. The snake-dove bowed its head in subjection. Around her neck and shoulders appeared a white bridal veil.

I wanted to kill the snake-dove; I thought I might be able to attack her from behind as she was entering the cave. Unfortunately, the red beast realized what I intended to do. It walked on its hind legs and stood between me and its bride.

The ghastly face of the beast was about half a meter away from mine. It could have eaten me up, but something prevented it from doing so. With its face towards me, the red lion backed away as the snake-dove slithered towards the cave. There was nothing I could do. The beasts were too large for me!

As soon as they entered the cave, the red beast raised its hand, grabbed a garage door which appeared above its head, and rolled it down to the ground. From the cracks around the door, I saw the beast embracing the snake-dove. They began to dance romantically. The intense red light of the cave flickered through the cracks, in unison with their passion.

I stood there alone, observing all these frightening things, while all the students at the school slept in their dark classrooms. I was very sad because both terrible beasts remained alive to continue the misleading and killing of the innocent doves”.

The symbols in my vision were:

1. The “**straight road**”.
2. The “**school**” on the left side of the road.
3. The “**classrooms**”.
4. The “**stone wall**”.
5. The “**well**”.
6. The “**tall eucalyptus trees**”.
7. The “**innocent (harmless) doves**”.
8. The “**concrete floor**”.
9. The “**waters**”.
10. The “**nest near the school office**”.
11. The “**Big Serpent**”.
12. The “**salt of the earth**”.
13. The “**snake-dove**”.

The interpretation of the dream

1. The “**straight road**” symbolizes the Lord Jesus; He said, “*I Am the Way*” (John 14:4-6). When God brought me out of the religious organization of the so-called Jehovah’s Witnesses, He placed me on the “**straight road**” that leads

to Himself and to life. Standing on the “straight road” reveals a personal “contact” with Him --- a personal relationship.

2. In this vision, the Lord showed me Satan’s “**trap**” in the form of a **school**. Every trap has bait. In this case, the bait is the presence of a school. False religious organizations which call themselves “Christian”, present “knowledge” as the prime requirement for salvation. To their followers, they say that the knowledge their religious organization offers constitutes **the truth leading to eternal life and that God provides this knowledge through their Mother Organization only!** Thus, these religious institutions appear as “schools” in order to lure all those who wish to learn the things of God.

The fact that the “school” was located on the left side of the “Road” (Matthew 25:33), proves that Jesus is against these institutions because,

- a) they do not preach the truth about His Person,
 - b) they discourage, indeed forbid, the personal relationship that must exist between God and those who believe in Christ, and
 - c) they insult the teaching abilities of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 23:8,10; John 14:26; 16:13; 1 Corinthians 14:26).
3. The different “**classrooms**” of the school represent all the different cults which make up Satan’s religious trap.

4. The school yard was enclosed by “**stone walls**”. It reminded me of the yard of the “Master-builders”. The “stone wall” offered a feeling of protection --- but in this case, it had become the wall of a prison. Christians do not rest their hopes for protection on a man-made stronghold, but on God who is a wall of fire around them and His glory is within them (Zechariah 2:5).

5. The presence of the “**well**” gives one the false feeling that Satan’s religious yard has the power to quench those who thirst for truth. **Jesus is the only fountain of truth. In fact, He is the Truth. He alone can give to those that thirst the true water of life.** Whoever drinks from the water that Jesus gives will never thirst again; and that water will become in him a spring of water welling up eternal life (John 4:7-15). **The true water that Jesus gives to those who believe in Him is the Holy Spirit** (John 7:37-39).

6. “**Trees**” symbolize people (Matthew 3:8,10; Isaiah 61:3; Jeremiah 17:7,8). The “**tall trees**” symbolize men in **high positions** (Daniel 4:10,22; Ezekiel 31). The fact that they were not fruit trees signifies that they are not born-again Christians (Jude 12). Therefore, they are not saved, neither are they in God’s favor (Matthew 3:8,10).

The reason for their being Eucalyptus trees, can be explained by the Greek language. The Greek word, “**Ευκάλυπτος**” (Efkalyptos), consists of two words:

- a) The word “**Ευ**” (ef) which means “good”, and
- b) the word “**καλυπτός**” (kalyptos) which means “the one who covers”.

These people are trusted and exalted as **good coverings**.

7. Those who follow the True Jesus of the Bible, who is the Most Holy One of Daniel 9:24 (please check NIV's footnote), must become like **innocent doves** (Matthew 10:16; Greek text). If these "**doves**" will not focus on Jesus, **if they will not fix their eyes on the "Way"**, they could be misled and fall into Satan's religious trap that looks so "Christian"! Once there, "**Religion**" will cause them to forget Jesus, their first love (Revelation 2:4), and eventually, they will begin to trust, look up to, and follow the symbolic "**tall eucalyptus trees**". They will come to the point of believing that if they build their "nests" and try to raise their young in an environment that appears "Christian" **under the "shadow" of the "tall eucalyptus trees"**, they will find protection and security from the supernatural enemy of mankind. Their thinking was proven wrong by the casualties on the concrete floor. The eucalyptus trees were unable to protect them. Only those who trust in God and dwell under His shadow, will find protection (Psalms 91:2,4,9; 17:8; 36:7; 57:1; 49:2).

8. The "**concrete**" floor of the yard reveals that "**Religion**" (not the Church) is **man-made**.

9. The presence of the "**waters**" in the yard shows that Satan's false so-called "Christian religion", like Babylon the great, has captivated many people and multitudes and nations and tongues (Revelation 17:15). Satan can "**swim**" or move very swiftly and freely among "religious" people because they do not have the power to resist him (James 4:7; Revelation 12:11). Only those who are truly born again have the power to resist him because the Spirit of Christ dwells in them and the Scriptures say that greater is He

who is in us than him who is in the world (1 John 4:4; Romans 8:9-17).

10. The presence of the **snake's nest** near the school office indicates that Satan orchestrates the different groups of his "religious" yard right from the top.

11. The big serpent symbolizes Satan (Revelation 20:2). The fact that the opening of Satan's cave became progressively larger indicated that it was God's will for me to learn the depths of Satan's "religious" trap and how it operates. My Heavenly Father would not let me remain ignorant of Satan's schemes (2 Corinthians 2:11; Revelation 2:24; Ephesians 6:10,11). And I learned that we cannot play with him or his religious system **even if it looks innocent**. He is the father of lies and of all that is false (John 8:44), the master of deception, the great dragon, and the old serpent, as he is described in Revelation 12:9. There we read:

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him."

12. The true Christians are the **"salt of the earth"** (Matthew 5:13). The old serpent, which deceives the whole world, hides himself among the "salt of the earth" that happens to be trapped inside his "religious" yard. For as long as true Christians remain in the "classrooms" of his religious "school", instead of walking on the "Road", their only Teacher (Matthew 23:8,10), Satan uses them as a cover-up of his presence in order to deceive and to attract others. When I tried to warn those who came into the dark yard about the snake lurking nearby, they ridiculed me because

when they looked around, they saw only the “salt of the earth”. For this reason, the command “*Come out of her my people*” (Revelation 18:4) should apply not only to those of the salt of the earth who are trapped in Babylon the great, but also to those who are trapped in Satan’s so-called “Christian” religious yard. **If they come out, Satan will not be able to hide anymore.** Thus, the “trap” he has set near the “Road”, will be manifest to all, and, like Babylon the great, it will remain as a sole dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit (Revelation 18:2).

13. “Religion” --- not the Church --- the symbolic “lady” of Satan’s religious yard, in other words, **his “bride”**, appears before men as a harmless dove; but in reality she is a poisonous snake that kills the spirituality of the simple-hearted “doves” that trust her, and leaves them hollow and dry!

What a great difference there is between Jesus and the snake-dove. Jesus “feeds” those who come to Him; the snake-dove “feeds” herself upon those who come to her; thus, she becomes bigger and stronger.

The life of those who have experienced the infilling of the Holy Spirit is filled with God’s joy because they are enjoying a personal relationship and fellowship with Him (2 Corinthians 13:14). On the other hand, Satan tries to provide those who fall into his “trap” with a **religious joy**, but he cannot provide them with a personal relationship and fellowship with God (1 John 1:3 and 2 Corinthians 13:14). Therefore, since they can not experience God, they have only “**religion**”!

The Holy Spirit who dwells inside the born-again Christians (John 14:17), keeps them alert in the service of God and of their fellow men. He helps them display in their lives **His** “fruit” which is love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance (Galatians 5:22,23). On the other hand, the “trap” keeps those who fall in it busy with holidays, celebrations, and other religious ordinances and customs. People are fond of these functions because they have fun. But, those who don’t have a personal relationship with God, use them as a chance to express the sinful works of the flesh which are adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, wrath, emulations, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revivals, and such like (Isaiah 1:10-18; Galatians 5:16-21). Kept busy with religious holidays and celebrations year after year, people do not realize that life is passing away and most of the captives in the “trap” continue to sleep in their dark “classrooms”, lacking the ever-burning fire of the Holy Spirit!

When God extends His grace to some of the captives and enlightens them with His Holy Spirit, it is as if He awakes them from their sleep. This is what happened to me. But unfortunately, **when they tell others about the “trap”, the snake-dove disfellowships them**, excommunicates them, and sometimes persecutes them to death, as she has done from ancient times to the prophets, the apostles and the witnesses of Jesus. **She does this because she wants to prevent them from awakening others** and because she wants to continue to rule as queen over the people who wish to find and serve God. The only One who deserves to rule as King over all humans is the Lord Jesus because He is the King of kings (Revelations 19:6; Daniel 7:13,14). There are many similarities between the snake-dove of my

vision, who entered the cave of the “red light”, and the great harlot of Revelation, chapters 17 and 18.

Finally, I would like to comment about the **“hydro pole”** which fed **the man-made electricity** to the “school” in order to keep the lights shining. The hydro pole was the dead trunk of a “tree” (Jude 12). It symbolizes those who knowingly or unknowingly serve Satan and try to illuminate the religious “trap” with their human “wisdom”. Human wisdom is foolishness in God’s eyes (1 Corinthians 3:19). One day, God will burn up that human wisdom, and Babylon, the great harlot **and her harlot daughters**, will be destroyed by the very people they captivated and ruled over for centuries (Revelation 17:16).

Chapter Ten

Religion Kills; the Lord Jesus Gives Life

The first dream about Philip

The Lord Jesus said: *“But when that One comes, the Spirit of truth, he will ... announce the coming things to you.”* (John 16:13).

These words of the Lord Jesus refer to **prophecy**. Prophecy is the foretelling of things to come. These things are not always world events, but also events which are about to occur in the daily lives of believers (Acts 11:27,28; 21:9-14).

In addition to foretelling future events, a prophet’s responsibility was to defend the pure worship of the true God, to expose the wrong doings of men as God would reveal them to him, and to call them to repentance. That made prophets extremely unpopular; the result was that many lost their lives (Matthew 23:29-37).

Prophets are vital members of the body of Christ. If anyone thinks that true prophets have not existed since the death of the apostles, or since the Bible was completed, he is wrong. If the body of Christ were without prophets, it would be like a body that is crippled and incomplete.

Contrary to what some people choose to believe, the Living

God has proved to me, time and time again, that the Spirit of true prophecy is in operation today. The Spirit of God is active in prophesying, to bring glory to the Lord Jesus (John 16:14). According to the apostle Paul, prophecies are given to different members of the body for the edification of the believers (1 Corinthians 14:3).

At this point, I would like to tell you about a personal experience which proves all the foregoing to be true. It proves that the Holy Spirit announces coming events to the believers in Christ, that God is alive and answers prayers, and that the age of miracles has not yet passed away as some groups proclaim.

This experience resulted in:

- 1) The building up of a believer's faith.
- 2) His and my encouragement and joy.
- 3) The glorification of the Lord Jesus.

It also proved that "religion" --- **not the Church** --- is a spiritual "cancer" that "kills", while, on the other hand, **the Lord Jesus gives life.**

That Monday morning, I awoke after having had the following dream:

"I stood on some huge rocks beside the seashore. Standing next to me was a young man who, over his clothes, wore a black robe. The appearance of the robe gave me the impression that he had something to do with religion and that perhaps he held a responsible position in his church. For

some reason, I did not recognize him, but in my spirit, I knew that he was a friend. He had a spiritual problem, and I tried to help him by talking to him about God.

Before us, the sea was calm and shiny like a sheet of glass. Suddenly, a strange thing happened. The sea before us separated into five sections. These sections formed into large parallel stripes which extended as far as I could see:

- 1) A part of the ocean, immediately next to the shore, remained calm and stationary.
- 2) Next to it, there was a section of ocean which began to flow like a river, it flowed in a straight band from left to right, and parallel to the shoreline.
- 3) Next to it, there was another section of ocean which remained calm and stationary.
- 4) On the other side of it was another part of the ocean which began to flow like a river. But this one flowed in an opposite direction to the first one. It flowed in a straight line from right to left, and parallel to the shoreline.
- 5) Next to it, the rest of the ocean remained calm and stationary.

The two opposite river-like currents became stronger by the minute. At the same time, two strong winds, blowing from opposite directions, began to blow over the two currents creating swells and white caps. The splashing of the waves combined with the rushing winds created a tumultuous noise. The scene was awe-inspiring. We stood amazed to

see parallel and opposite river-like currents, flowing with waves and white-caps through a perfectly calm sea.

Suddenly, a third strong wind began to blow forcefully towards us. To avoid the wind, I thought of hiding behind a huge rock that was nearby.

When I made it to the rock, a strong white light filled up the sky and the entire atmosphere. I looked at the source of that light and saw two oval shaped lights, about three meters tall, hovering in midair above the two currents. My spirit knew immediately, and with certainty, that these two lights were the glory of God the Father and of His Son, Jesus Christ.”

At this point, I woke up. In my spirit, I knew that this was a prophetic dream. I knew I would meet a person who would need spiritual help. I knew he was someone I had met before, a friend of mine, but I did not know exactly who it would be because in my dream, I was unable to see his face. But why was the ocean moving in such a strange manner?

Four days later, on Friday morning, I awoke after having had the same dream. Now, I was convinced that the dream was indeed a prophecy, and that it wouldn't be long before I met my unknown friend, because in Genesis 41:32 we read:

“And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.”

That same evening, Philip, a good friend of mine, phoned me from Vancouver, and asked whether it would be all right for him to spend the weekend with us at our home in Powell River. I was very happy to invite him.

I had met Philip many years ago, approximately one week after the Witnesses had disfellowshipped me. As a former member of the committee, I still had on me the key to the Kingdom Hall. Because of the upsetting events of my disfellowshipping, I had forgotten to return it. Thus, the Sunday after my disfellowshipping, my wife and I decided to go to the Kingdom Hall earlier than usual, so that I could return the key to the first elder who would arrive to open the doors. When we got there, there was a young man standing beside the door. He smiled and introduced himself --- it was Philip.

Philip was not a Witness of Jehovah. He explained to me that he had come to Vancouver recently. He also explained that when he had worked in a town in northern British Columbia, he had searched for the Truth. He told me that while searching, he had had a strange experience. In a vision, a voice told him to go to Vancouver, find the Kingdom Hall of the Greek Jehovah's Witnesses, stand by the door, and attach himself to the first person who came to the Hall. I "happened" to be that person.

Philip and I studied the Bible together for many months. But the time came when my family and I moved to Powell River, about five hours from Vancouver, while Philip moved to another town in eastern Canada. For several years, we lost contact with each other.

When, by the grace of God, we met again, Philip was married and had a family. He had now become a member of a so-called “Christian” denomination which believes that salvation is something that can be gained through works instead of being God’s gift to those who believe in Jesus (Ephesians 2:8,9). He was a kind, good, and gentle person. When he phoned me that Friday evening, it never occurred to me that he would be the “unknown friend” of my dream. I would never have guessed that Philip had a spiritual problem.

The next day, Philip arrived in Powell River. We decided to go for a walk to Powell Lake. This lake is one of the many beautiful lakes near Powell River. It is a ten-minute walk from my restaurant (the “Granada”). As we strolled along, Philip paused and asked me:

“Tell me,” Costa, “have you had any new revelations from the Lord recently? Have you had any word of knowledge or any spiritual experience of any kind?”

Philip knew that the Spirit of prophecy operates in me from time to time.

I answered, “Yes. But this event has not yet been fulfilled, therefore, I can’t ...”

Philip interrupted me. He wanted me to explain what I had experienced; he was really interested. So, I paused for a moment or two, picked up a small, pointed rock from the ground, and began to explain to him the dream I’d had twice that week. While I explained it to him, I used the pointed rock to draw a picture on the dust consisting of the shape of the seashore, and the movements of the river-like

currents. He listened very carefully. When I finished, he asked me:

“So, you did not see the face of your friend?”

“No!” I replied.

“How will you know to whom you should speak in order to help him?”

“These matters are directed by the Spirit of the Lord,” I answered. “All I have to do is to wait upon the Lord to bring him to me.”

We changed the conversation to other subjects and did not talk about my dream again that evening.

About noon the next day, Sunday, Philip and I sat in the restaurant. He suddenly stood up and said in a serious tone:

“Costa, I need your help. I have a problem.”

“Philip, tell me about it, and if there is anything I can do to help, I’ll do it. If your problem is beyond human help, then, both of us will pray to God; I’m sure that He will help you.”

We decided to leave the restaurant and go to a quiet place to discuss his problem. As we drove around, Philip said:

“Costa, I have a big problem. I suffer from a spiritual ‘cancer’.”

“What do you mean?”

“Costa,” he continued, “from the time we studied the Bible together, I became a Christian, and I have remained a Christian since that time. I go to church; I am a deacon; I study the Bible; I have a Christian family; I preach to others about God’s kingdom; in fact, I have submitted my life to God. But recently, I have been suffering from doubts. I doubt whether God is alive. Is there a God? I have never experienced anything supernatural. I have never seen a miracle to help me believe that God lives. When I pray, I feel that I am talking to the air. God has never answered me. If He is alive, shouldn’t He talk back to me? These doubts, like cancer, are eating my faith away. I feel my faith is dying; and I came to you hoping you could help me!”

The dreams I had had from the Lord that week began to make sense. But, how would it be possible for the Father and the Son to “shine”, to be glorified in Philip’s heart and dry soul?

We eventually drove to a beautiful place north of Powell River named Okeover Arm. There, we walked to the beach and sat down on the large rocks. We talked for six hours. We discussed creation versus the theory of evolution. I thought that my thoughts on this subject would help him realize that God exists. But we talked all these hours in vain. He was not interested in human reasoning. He wanted to have a “living testimony”, a real proof, that God exists. He said, “Perhaps God existed some time in the past. He created everything that exists, and then He died. Perhaps this is the reason He does not make Himself known to us today, and He does not answer my prayers.” Then he said, “If I do not experience God’s reality today, if I do not see a miracle, I will stop calling myself a Christian.”

During our deep discussion, I realized that the “Religion” he had been serving for years had dried up his spirituality. The snake-dove had been feeding herself on his tithing, but was unable to feed him spiritually (see “Should Christians Tithe?” Appendix C). **She was unable to help him experience God.** She had drained his faith. He was about to die. Now, only the true “Dove” of God, who dwells in those who believe in the True Jesus of the Bible, could help him (Mark 1:10; John 14:15-17).

After we had talked for about six hours, I realized that Philip could not be helped by man, but only by God through a miracle, through a supernatural display of His power. Thus, I said:

“Philip, I am not God; neither do I have the gift of miracles. What you are asking, only God can give. God is a good Father who cares about the spiritual condition of His children. The Bible says, ‘... *if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For man believes with his heart and so is justified, and he confesses with his lips, and so is saved*’ (Romans 10:9). If you are saved, God will give you what you need to stay spiritually alive. What I suggest is that we go home right now. We will go down on our knees, and we will pray to God. Let’s ask Him to give you what you need. Jesus said, ‘*Hitherto you have asked nothing in my name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.*’” (John 16:24). He agreed.

As we were heading home, we approached a trail which leads to a very beautiful viewpoint, named Dinner Rock. I drove the car down that trail to the sea. I wanted to show that lovely spot to my friend who was so discouraged.

When we came to the end of the trail, we left the car in the parking lot, walked down to the shore and stood on the huge rocks at the shore. Immediately, I recognized this area, this scenery. I felt as if I were in my dream for a third time. This was the exact place I had seen in my dream. And I was standing there with a friend who had a spiritual problem, and I was trying to help him. Wow!

I was instantly full of courage. Perhaps right here, right now, the Lord would prove to Philip that He exists. Perhaps here, Philip would see the glory of the Father and of the Son through the power of the Holy Spirit. But how? Silently, I asked the Lord to open Philip's heart and mind so he could see that the Creator exists.

I talked to Philip for another half hour with no results to show. I was disappointed. I was tired. I had nothing else to say. I had totally run out of ideas. Philip could not be helped with words, period. He was asking for a sign!

He sat down on a rock. He was silent and depressed. I also sat down on a rock, and I too, was quiet and downhearted. We looked towards the ocean, which was shiny and calm like a sheet of glass. We had fallen into deep thoughts. It was perfectly silent. Quiet and still. I found one more chance to pray to God silently:

“My Father, I cannot help my friend. If You have saved him, then, You will help him. Please Father, show him your power. Show him that you exist and that you care for your children. If this is the actual place you showed me in my dream, if this is the right time, if Philip is the person who must be helped, then, You and Your Son must be glorified in His mind now. Please, give him a sign.”

At this point of my prayer, I heard the soft voice of God speaking in my mind saying,

“What would you like Me to do, Costa?”

My spirit was filled with God’s peace.

“Father,” I said, “yesterday afternoon, when Philip and I were walking towards Powell Lake, I explained to him the dream you gave me. I drew on the dust of the earth the shape of the shore on which he and I are now standing. I also drew the movements of the two river-like currents. God of Israel, please make the ocean move before us as it moved in my dream, so that Philip will see and believe that You are alive. You opened the Red Sea so that your people could walk through it. You certainly have the power to cause our sea to move as You showed me in the dream ...”

As I was praying, the ocean began to move! Right in front of my eyes, I saw the sea separating into five parts --- three stationary parts and two parts which, like two very slow-moving rivers, began to flow in opposite directions. In the perfect silence of the surroundings, I heard my voice like the noise of thunder coming from my mouth:

“Philip! The sea! The water! Look!”

Philip jumped! (I’m sure I must have frightened him). He searched above the sea as if he were looking for a boat. He did not observe the water.

“What’s the matter, Costa?” he asked.

“Philip!” I exclaimed, “Look! The ocean is moving! It’s moving!”

Philip looked at the water; this time he saw the movements of the two bodies of water which were moving slowly but steadily.

“Wow!” he exclaimed, “The sea is moving!”

Right after this, we remained silent. We stood there looking at the power of the God of Israel as He separated the ocean into five parts and caused two of them to flow like rivers in opposite directions. We stood astonished and watched those two rivers flowing faster and faster by the minute.



This is not an actual picture of the miracle. The author produced this illustration from memory; but this is the actual site of the miracle.

As we gazed at this scene, the winds came up. One wind blew over one river from left to right and the other wind blew from right to left over the other river. The strong winds created waves --- large waves with white caps --- on

the two “rivers”. The other three parts of the ocean remained still and calm. The winds did not disturb them.

Suddenly, a third wind came up and blew towards us. It, too, did not disturb the three calm parts of the ocean. Philip explained to me that he had had problems with his lungs in the past, and that he could not stand any breeze or wind blowing directly onto him. He looked around for something he could shelter behind. When he saw the huge rock that was lying a short distance away (the rock I had seen in my dream), he asked me if I would come with him and shelter behind it!

We hurried there and sat down safely behind the big rock, talking excitedly about the miracle we had witnessed. Every few minutes, Philip looked over the top of the rock. He wanted to see if the two “rivers” were still separated from the rest of the ocean. Yes! Yes! They were separated and flowing with white caps. There was a strong, continuous noise caused by the rushing of the mighty winds.

Philip stood up and, despite the winds, walked towards the ocean. He did not invite me to follow him. He didn’t say a word. Standing at the edge of the water, he faced the ocean. I waited a short time before joining him, because I wanted to leave him alone to gather his thoughts together. After a while, I walked down and stood facing him. He was crying. The tears --- tears of relief --- were flowing down his cheeks.

“Philip,” I asked him, “are you satisfied? Was that the kind of sign you were looking for? What do you say? Is God alive?”

Philip could not answer right away because he was overcome by emotions. When the emotional lump which had blocked his vocal cords cleared, he looked at me and said:

“Yes, Costa, I have seen the sign I was searching for. The Lord is alive. But that is not the only thing that makes me cry. There is something else which I have not told you. At the beginning of the week, when I decided to come to Powell River, I prayed silently to God. You see, I did not want to pray out loud for fear that demons might hear me and play a trick on me. And I prayed this way:

‘God, if You exist, if You are alive and if You can hear me, Costa from Powell River has told me that, from time to time, You reveal things to him about persons he should help spiritually. But, please God, now that I have decided to visit him, do not reveal my spiritual problems to him. And if You wish to show him something, please do me this favor: Do not reveal my face to him! Do not show him who will visit him. I do not want to have my friend worried about me before I go to see him’.

Do you remember, Costa? Yesterday, on the way to Powell Lake, I asked you whether you saw the face of your friend in your vision, and you told me you hadn’t. Therefore, God not only gave me a great sign to see --- the ocean moving in front of my eyes the exact way you described it to me yesterday, but He also answered my personal, secret, and silent prayer, and honored my request! He did not show you my face!!!”

There are no words to describe the deep emotions we experienced!

Philip returned to Vancouver the next day. He was filled with joy because the Lord heard him and healed him from his spiritual “cancer” which was eating his faith away. And I praise the Lord, because He is Good and because He proved once again to one of His children that **HE LIVES!**

The second dream about Philip

A few years passed. Philip continued to “serve” (God?) in the same “Christian” cult. The snake-dove which had sucked the faith out of him and had left him nearly dry, continued to keep him very busy with her different programs, laws, and ordinances. The Spirit of freedom was missing from his “religious”/Christian (?) life. He forgot the “Way”, the “Road”, which all Christians should follow.

One day, Philip visited us in Powell River once again. He asked me whether the Lord had given me a word of wisdom, or a prophecy regarding him. I told him that I hadn’t received any. We spent a few days together, working and studying the Bible. On Saturday morning, over breakfast, he told me that the night before he had had a strange dream. He said that in his dream, he was sleeping in the spare bedroom in my home, and while he was asleep, I opened the door and walked into the bedroom holding a brand-new pair of shoes. I woke him up and asked him to wear them. He told me that he didn’t need a new pair of shoes because he had his own. I insisted that he put them on. Finally, I laid them on the floor, next to his bed, and left the bedroom. Immediately, he woke up, and looked on the floor to find the shoes, but they were not there. The dream had been so very real to him!

When he finished telling me about his dream, he asked me if I could interpret it. Smiling, I looked at him and told him

that I knew the interpretation of his dream. I knew because our living God, who invites people to come to real Jesus of the Bible and to freedom, had, that same night, also given me a dream about Philip. Here is my dream:

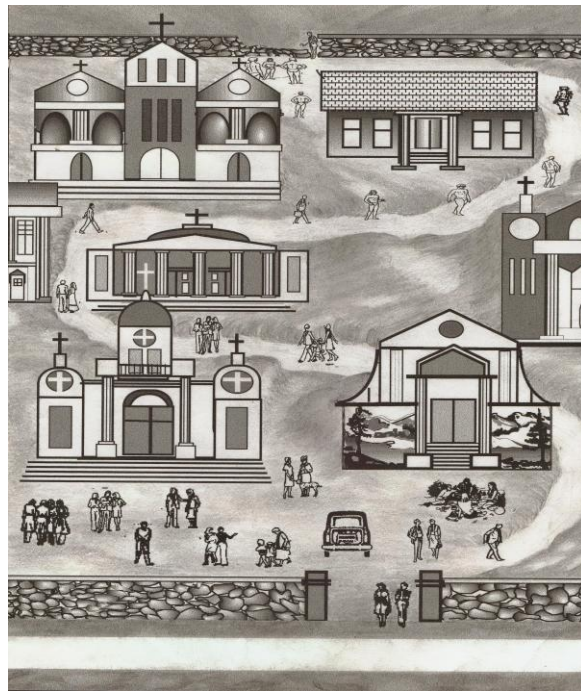
“I was driving on a straight and narrow road. In the car with me was Philip and two relatives of mine. The sea was on the right side of the road.

Suddenly on the left side of the road, we noticed a tall stone wall. Eventually, we came to a break in the wall, which was the entrance to a yard. The entrance was wide enough to allow me to drive into the yard. When I did so, we saw many religious buildings. One of my relatives asked me:

“Costa, why did you stop here? We still have a long way to go.”

“I am stopping here for a few minutes only;” I replied, “I would like to show something to Philip.”

As Philip and I walked into the yard, my relatives waited for us beside the entrance.



We looked around. There were many people in the yard; men, women, and children. The surroundings were very joyful, friendly, and uplifting. The people gathered in different sized groups and were having a good time. Some were praying together, others were barbecuing, some were joking and laughing, and others were talking.

The religious buildings were further into the yard. Philip and I walked towards them. On the outside walls of one of the front buildings, we saw some beautiful paintings. We stood and admired them. Surely this was the perfect place to be! Everything was so beautiful, so well organized, so peaceful and serene!

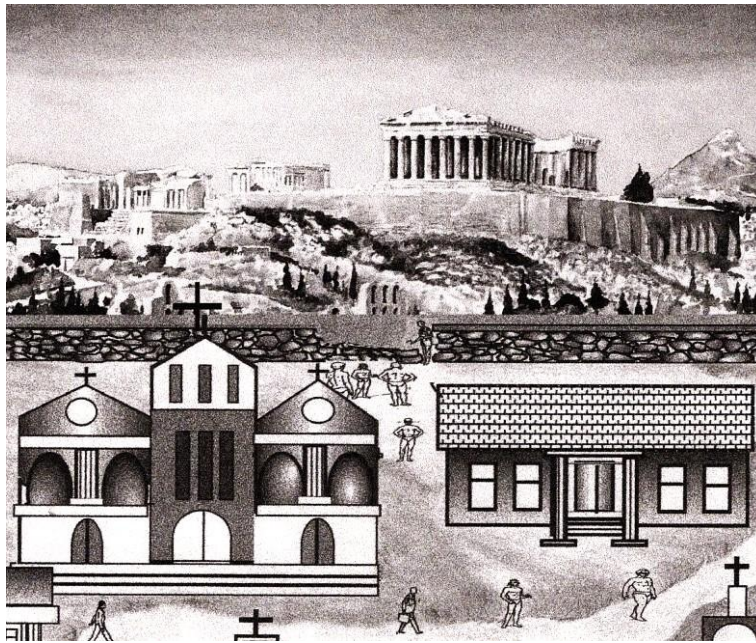
We continued walking towards the back wall of the yard, following a pathway which zigzagged around many religious buildings. We were not alone. There were others who were walking on the same path.

We noticed that the road was becoming progressively steeper. Our walk was becoming more difficult. We were becoming more tired by the minute; taking the next step was a real effort.

Then another strange thing happened. As we strolled along, we began losing our clothes! Suddenly, I lost my shoes! I took another step, and I lost my socks! They just vanished, and I continued to walk barefooted. After I took a few more steps, my trousers became shorts! I took a few more steps and I lost my shirt! I became naked from the waist up! By the time we arrived at the rear stone wall of the yard, most of the people were completely naked!

I looked at the stone wall. I noticed that part of the wall had been knocked over leaving an opening which made it possible for people to jump over and land on the side of a mountain.

In front of the broken wall stood a guard who would not allow anyone to get out of the yard unless they paid him first. Many gave him all the money they had, and naked, they jumped out of the yard and onto the mountain side. They did this without complaining. Reaching the mountain was their greatest wish. Being there would mean they had reached the highest level of purity and spirituality.



I looked at the mountain, and I noticed some ancient ruins and pagan temples.

I also noticed that some of the people who were on the mountainside bent over and scooped up handfuls of black mud which they spread onto their naked bodies! Because there was no water on the mountain, they would be unable to wash themselves and the black sticky mud would remain pasted to their dirty bodies!

I approached the guard at the wall and rebuked him for swindling money from the people. I noticed that when a person paid with a large bill, the guard tried to swindle him by short-changing him. Oh!!! I was **so** upset with his shy-ster ways and crooked dealing!!

As we argued, he offered me a photograph. I looked at it and recognized the faces of prestigious people who were popular with the public. He did this to impress me with the fact that this religious yard was supported by people of high, exalted positions; but I was not impressed. He then asked me to look at the back side of the photograph. I flipped it over and saw a picture of a high mountain, and a swift-flowing river. I saw the river actually flowing in that photograph. The guard smiled at me. He wanted to impress upon me that through the religious system, I would be able to go to the mountain from which this river springs.

While I was still arguing with him, my friend Philip jumped over the wall and began to climb the mountain. Momentarily, I felt the desire to join him so that we could both visit the ruins of antiquity, but suddenly I remembered the “Way”, the Road on which we travelled before we entered the yard. Oh! We had become so involved in the yard, with whatever was happening there, that we had literally forgotten about the Road and the relatives who were waiting for us by the gate!

Suddenly, I felt very uncomfortable; we should go back to the Road. We should not waste anymore time; I had better call Philip:

“Phi-lip!” I yelled loudly. But he did not hear me; he continued to climb higher.

“Phi-i-i-i-li-i-i-p!” I yelled louder. This time, he heard me. He stopped, turned, and looked at me. I waived at him, inviting him to return. He began to climb down. When he came close to me, I noticed that he was breathing heavily. He was very, very tired! I reminded him of the Way, of the narrow Road we must travel on, and of the relatives who were waiting for us by the gate. I told him that we’d better leave this place. He seemed to agree with me.”

When I finished describing the vision to him, I asked Philip to open his Bible at Isaiah chapter 2 and verses 2-6. There we read:

“And it shall be in the last days, the mountain of the house of Jehovah shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, Come and let us go up to the mount of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob. And he will teach from His ways, and we will walk in His paths ... O house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of Jehovah.”

After we read the above words, I asked:

“What do you think the expression ‘the mountain of the house of the Lord’ means?”

“The ‘mountain’ is the Kingdom of God,” he replied, “and the ‘house’ is where God dwells. Someday, the Kingdom of the Lord will be exalted above the rest of the ‘mountains’ and the ‘hills’, that is, above the big and small kingdoms of the earth.”

“I agree,” I said. “What is the Name of the Path, of the Way, that leads us to the mountain of the house of the Lord?”

“The Road that leads us to God the Father is only One!” Philip said. “Therefore, the Name of the Road is Jesus. He said, *‘I am the Way ... no one comes to the Father but by Me.’*” (John 14:6).

“That’s correct!” I replied. “Now, let us analyze the vision. The first thing I observed is that the four of us were following the same Road. That means that we believe in Jesus. While travelling, on the left side of the road, we noticed the religious yard. The fact that it was on the left-hand side of the road, means that ‘religion’ is not in God’s favor (Matthew 25:33,41).

Then, we saw those who dwelt in the yard of the religious empire that appeared to be ‘Christian’. They seemed to be happy that they were fulfilling the good advice about fellowship given in Hebrews 10:25. There we read, *‘Let’s not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another, and all the more as you see the day approaching.’*

The foregoing admonition for fellowship is good. Fellowship is wonderful. I am not arguing against it. But we must be careful. In his attempt to enslave us, Satan can use any-

thing that appears to be ‘Christian’ and ‘biblical’. Basically, the questions we should ask ourselves before we decide to fellowship with any group are:

- a) With whom should we fellowship?
- b) What is fellowship supposed to do for us?

The answers are quite simple:

- a) As members of the body of Christ, we must fellowship with the rest of the members of the body of Christ.
- b) The fellowship of the saints builds up and encourages the members of the body to continue their walk on the Road in freedom --- **it does not enslave!**

Some groups turn the admonition for fellowship into **law!** These groups flash Hebrews 10:25 before their membership as a requirement for salvation and cause them to feel that fellowship is more important than walking on the Road. In fact, some groups forbid their members to develop a personal relationship with God because, as they say, God does not deal with individuals today. They say that God directs them as a group through their Mother Organization! **What a satanic lie!** Therefore, Satan lures into his religious yard new proselytes by providing them with ‘company’, that is, fellowship, friendship, good times through religious celebrations, and other religious activities, and with Christian-like love which lasts for as long as the persons subject themselves, without complaining, under their leaders, their laws and ordinances, and accept their doctrines without questioning whether they are biblically sound or not!

This system has captivated many people. They are happy to spend their lives in the religious yard, because there, they have company, friendship, and good times. They feel that by taking part in these activities, they are fulfilling their obligation to God. In fact, they feel that by fellowshiping, they have completed their worship of God. Many never open the 'door' of their hearts to allow Christ to come in; they never develop a responsible, personal relationship with Him. These people are happy to just 'belong' to a religious group of their choice, convincing themselves that this action will secure their salvation!

Motivated by their leaders and by the numbers of their 'company', they develop a religious pride and feel that they are in the truth. Thus, they are not interested in studying the Bible to examine their beliefs. Neither are they interested in going deeper into the religious walk of their group, because that winding road which is supposed to bring them to the height of their religious purity and spirituality, becomes progressively steeper and more tiring. They feel that perhaps the religious road is only for a few special religious people who give up everything they own to reach the height of their religious life, on the 'mountain' (in their religious institution) which their religious group presents as the 'mountain of the house of the Lord'.

For as long as people in the yard are surrounded by the stone wall and by the company of their religious group, they are totally satisfied. Thus, day by day, and year by year, life passes away and their addiction to good times and fellowshiping, makes them ignore, or even forget, the real Road which is on the outside, beyond the stone wall, outside the religious captivity because walking with Christ is not a religion but **a relationship!** They don't want to leave

the good times behind. Besides, walking on the Narrow Road is not always enjoyable. Sometimes it makes you lose people and things you love, makes you feel lonely, and fills you with sorrows (Matthew 7:14; 19:21). But, to those who follow this Road, It offers freedom, truth, hope, eternal life, and the sacred promise that It will lead them to the real mountain of the House of the Lord!”

After I said that, I asked Philip:

“What do you think? Is it possible that the mountain of my dream pictures the mountain of the House of the Lord?”

“No!” said Philip. “The mountain of your vision is not a picture of the Mountain of the House of the Lord. The Bible tells us that when we go to the Lord, He will give us white robes to wear. It does not say that we will be naked so that everyone will see our nakedness” (Revelation 3:4,5, 17,18; 6:11).

“That’s correct!” I replied. “When the Christians go to the mountain of the Lord, they will not dirty themselves with ‘mud’ any longer. That means that the earthly sins of human nature will not be there (Revelation 21:27; 22:14). Also, the Christians don’t have to pay to reach the height of their purity. The blood of Jesus takes care of that (Revelation 1:5; 7:14). Besides, Christians do not enter through a knocked down wall, but through a proper ‘Door’. Jesus is that Door (John 10:9).

The river I saw in the photograph which the guard showed me does not picture the river of the water of life which flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Revelation 22:1). When I looked at the photo I did not see the tree of

life standing on each side of the river (Revelation 22:2)! In the end, the presence of the ancient Pagan temples and ruins proves that the mountain of my vision is not a picture of the mountain of the House (temple) of the Lord. **In the Temple of the Lord, idolatry does not exist.** The two cannot co-exist (2 Corinthians 6:16). But, when we carefully examine some of the so-called “Christian” groups, we find a mixture of Pagan and Christian doctrines. In some cases, only the names have been changed in order to make the old Paganism appear “Christian”. For instance, in the ancient Greek Pagan religion, Ares was the god of war, Poseidon was the god and protector of the sailors, and Mercury was the messenger and the leader of speech. The Pagans of ancient Greece sacrificed, promised things, and prayed to them for protection and guidance. Today, some of the fellowships do the same. Some pray to Saint George, the protector of all who are in the army, others to Saint Nicholas, who is supposed to be the patron of sailors, others to Saint Christopher who is supposed to be the patron of travelers, and others worship the modern-day Mercury, that is, their organization, which is supposed to be the only messenger of God (as I have explained in Chapter Six). The presence of Pagan temples at the “height” of the religious system shows how deceitful Satan is. Next to the True “Road”, he has set up a “Christian-like” religious system, with its own “twisted and tiring road”, which leads people back into the Paganism of antiquity!!!

Now, let us consider the different pictures of my dream:

The stone wall, the company, the good times, the beautiful religious buildings, the painted pictures, the wall-guard and the money, is human, earthly, and basically serve the flesh not the spirit of man! All these things attract the attention

of those who seek **the greatness of their religious groups because it satisfies their pride**. But how many people inside the stone wall notice and love the quiet, lonely, simple, and narrow Road? How many will come out of their beautiful surroundings in order to walk the Road (which means to have a personal relationship with Jesus), knowing that the rest of the fellowship will make fun of them, will ridicule them, call them names, hate them, and persecute them for the Name of the Road which is called Jesus?" (Matthew 5:11; 24:9).

"Costa," Philip said, "do you mean that the Christians should come out of their churches and stop meeting together?"

"No, Philip," I answered. "Do not confuse **the personal relationship** a born-again person has with Jesus, with **the place** of Christian fellowship. These are two different things:

- a) The most precious thing in a believer's life is to have **a personal relationship with the Lord**. Once a person is born again, he/she, like a "sheep", is placed by the Good Shepherd in His supernatural place of gathering --- **His hand!** (John 10:7,9,26-28). Nothing and no one have the power to remove the "sheep" from the hand of the Good Shepherd. **His hand is like a spiritual "corral". There, in the hand of the Lord, the believers have found salvation and protection --- not in religious institutions!**
- b) Christian fellowship is good, beneficial and builds up faith. After all, the gifts of the Spirit have been

given to the different members of the body for the benefit of the entire body. But when it comes to fellowship, because there are false religious groups which appear to be “Christian”, **Christians must exercise wisdom** and consider the following questions:

- 1) Is every group that is called “Christian” really the Church?
- 2) Are all the millions of churchgoers really the Church?

From my previous Bible studies, I have concluded that **the Church of Jesus Christ is not a religious institution but is those men and women who believe in Him, and in whom the Spirit of God dwells**. Therefore, can we really say that a group, which consists solely of people who do not believe (neither do they display with actions) that the Spirit of Christ indwells them, is part of the Church? The answer is **“No!” (Romans 8:9)**. What if a group is knowingly involved with **idolatry**? Should a member of the Church of Christ join such a group just for the sake of fulfilling the admonition for fellowship given in Hebrews 10:25? The apostle Paul would have answered **“No!”** Let’s read what he wrote in 2 Corinthians 6:16-18:

“What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said, “I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.” “Therefore, come out from them and be separate, says the Lord. Touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you.” “I will be a Father to you, and you will be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.”

According to the Amplified version of the Bible, in 1 Corinthians 10:14, the apostle Paul wrote the following: “... *my dearly beloved, shun (keep clear away from, avoid by flight if need be) any sort of idolatry (of loving or venerating anything more than God).*” And in 1 John 5:21, the apostle John wrote: “*Little children, keep yourselves from idols* (false gods) [from anything and everything that would occupy the place in your heart due to God, from any sort of substitute for Him that would take first place in your life].”

If the Christian community had obeyed the above apostolic admonitions right from the beginning, and throughout the centuries, we would not have any fellowship problems today. Paganism would have been totally and permanently separated from the Christian community. As the influence of Pagan beliefs and philosophies would not be present in the Christian community, the Christians would be united in the faith (Ephesians 4:13), and they would be rooted and built up in the Lord Jesus (Colossians 2:6,7). For those who follow the Road it would have been safe to fellowship with any group of Christians at any geographic area in the world. They would not be divided and separated by many different denominations (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). Unfortunately, through the infiltration of Pagan doctrines, philosophies, and practices, some groups were led, by corrupt men, into Satan’s trap. Once there, they began to display Satan’s fruit, that is, pride, lust for power, exaltation, strife, murders, hate, divisions, anger, ill temper, idolatry, immorality, impurity, indecency, sorcery, selfishness, etc. Therefore, they separated themselves from the Road, and they built a symbolic wall between them and the Road. By doing so, they created a religious yard which serves as a prison. This prison, on the one hand, enslaves, delays, and even prevents people from coming out onto the Road, while on the

contrary, as I said earlier, it sets people on a twisted and tiring religious road which leads them back into the ruins of Paganism of antiquity.

For this reason, in our era, it is advisable for a Christian's spiritual health to examine a fellowship **before one join**. Is the fellowship truly Christian? Does it encourage the personal walk on the Road? If not, the Christian must choose between fellowship and the Road. Does the fellowship remove from them the freedom that Christ gave them? Then, they must choose between fellowship and Christ. This is exactly what I did when I was in the fellowship of the Jehovah's Witnesses. I chose to be alone with the Lord rather than fellowshiping with those who had stripped me of my God-given freedom to think, and to express my thoughts.

Before joining a fellowship, one must ask the following important questions:

1. Does the fellowship point to the True "Road" that leads to God? In other words, does it preach the True Jesus of the Bible who is God in the flesh (John 1:1,14) and the YHWH of Romans 10:13 whose name one must call upon to be saved?
2. Does it teach that the pre-human Jesus was the **only-begotten**, not the only created, Son of God and therefore He is God by nature, of the same essence of the Father?
3. Does the fellowship teach that Jesus Christ is Eternal, Almighty, and Omnipresent?

If the answer to these questions is “**No**”, the Christians must stay well away from them.

4. The Name “**Jesus**” means “**YHWH the Savior**”. Does the fellowship teach that Jesus (YHWH the Savior) **came** and **is coming** in the flesh?
5. Does the fellowship teach that when Jesus returns **all** people will see Him with their actual eyes --- not just a few “believers” with their mind’s eyes?

If the answer to these questions is “**No**”, the Christian must stay away from this fellowship of antichrists and false prophets (1 John 4:1-3; 2 John 7; Revelation 1:7; Acts 1:9-11; Revelation 2:2).

Possibly, the fellowship teaches that:

6. The Lord Jesus did not pre-exist as a Person in heaven before His human birth by the virgin Mary and that He was nothing more than a “plan” in God’s mind?
7. The pre-human Jesus was not God but a created angel?
8. The pre-human Jesus was Michael the archangel?
9. The pre-human Jesus was the brother of Satan?
10. Jesus is God, but He also became known as Michael the archangel, and that He needs His angels to send Him reports as to what takes place on the earth?

11. The “Word” of John 1:1,2 is simply the word of the gospel preached by Jesus?
12. God, our Heavenly Father, whose name is Elohim, is an exalted man from another planet who sired Jesus in the flesh through sexual intercourse with the virgin Mary?

If the answer to these questions is “Yes”, then Christians must stay away from this fellowship of false teachers (Jude 4; 2 Peter 2:1). It is better for a Christian to walk on the Road alone, rather than fellowshipping with them.

After I said these things, Philip asked,

“What does the expression ‘walking on the Road’ really mean?”

“It means that the Christian has a personal ‘**contact**’ with the Road, i.e., **a personal relationship with Christ**. The Christian who has developed a personal relationship with God worships Him in Spirit and Truth, whether he is alone or whether he’s in a fellowship. That born again Christian worships the Lord under any circumstance and he is not affected by his surroundings (Romans 8:38,39). He knows that Christ dwells in him by His Holy Spirit, and he is happy to do His will (Romans 8:9-17). Such a person experiences the Father and the Son who dwell in him, and they ‘dine’ with him; **this person fellowships with the Father, with the Son and with the Holy Spirit** (Revelation 3:20; John 14:23; 1 John 1:3; 2 Corinthians 13:14). For this reason, Philip, I am giving you this advice:

Consider **YOUR** personal relationship with the Lord. Are you fruitful in the Spirit, or has your religion dried you up spiritually and made you tired with its religious weights and ordinances of men? **Pray to God and reason with Him** (Isaiah 1:18). Then, look at the fellowship of your religious group; does it hold you back from walking on the Road? If it does, then, accept the new pair of shoes that the Lord showed you in your dream, and begin to walk with Him Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The spiritual relatives, who also follow the Road, are waiting for you by the gate.”

Dear Member of the Body of Christ, here I conclude the special message which the Lord put into my heart to pass on to you. The overall message was:

1. **Remember your first love** (Revelation 2:4,5).
2. Flee from idolatry.
3. Do not follow false prophets.
4. Do not let a man or a religious institution enslave you under religious laws and ordinances.
5. Walk on the Road whose name is “Jesus”. Pray to Him so you can begin having a personal relationship with Him. Hold on to this contact with Him.

6. Enjoy the freedom that belongs to the children of God.

In the following chapter I will present, for your encouragement, a few personal testimonies to further show you that the Spirit of God is active today. Praise His Name!

Chapter Eleven

Ministry of Prayer

When the Lord Jesus Christ delivered me from the religious trap of the Watchtower, He showed me that His purpose for me is to pray for the salvation of men. It was about three o'clock in the morning when I had the following dream:

“The Spirit of God lifted me up in the air and took me through the streets. The neighborhoods were covered in thick darkness. The only light that surrounded me was the light of the One who carried me. The Spirit spoke to me and said,

‘Son of man, pray for the sons of Israel.’

And I prayed for the Sons of Israel. Then, the Spirit spoke to me again and said,

‘Son of man, now pray for the people of the earth.’

And I prayed for the people of the earth. When I finished praying, the Spirit brought me back to the place where He had picked me up and placed me gently on the ground.”

Thus, I now pray to God to lift the temporary blindness

from the sons of Israel which has prevented them from recognizing Yeshua Ha Mashiach, and I pray to God to help all the people of the earth to come to the True Jesus of the Bible who, according to Isaiah 53, is the Arm of YHWH (verses 1-4), who was to be wounded for our transgressions (verse 5), to suffer death on the cross (verse 8), to be buried in the tomb of a rich man (verse 9), and to be raised from the dead in order to see descendants --- His seed (verse 10). This Righteous Servant, the Arm of YHWH who became flesh in order to bare the sins of men (verse 12), **will justify many by their knowledge of Him** (verse 11; see NIV's foot note), which means that **He will justify all those who will recognize Him and believe in Him** (Verse 11; John 8:24; 6: 40).

Next, I will mention three cases which show that the Living God hears and answers the prayers of His children:

The dream about Helen

Helen was a relative. For many years, I prayed for her salvation. One night, the almighty God gave me comfort. With the following prophetic dream, He showed me that He would save her:

“I was standing on a wharf. The sea below me was dark and very deep. Close to the wharf, I saw old Helen swimming. I noticed that she was not a good swimmer, and that she looked extremely tired. In a loud voice, I told her to get out of the water and to come onto the wharf, but she wouldn't listen. She continued to swim until she sank under the black water of the sea, so that I could no longer see her.

I was greatly distressed; I wanted to dive in and save her, but I felt very weak. I knew that I did not have the strength

to jump into that pitch-black water, to search for her, and to bring her safely onto the wharf.

Suddenly, a short distance away, I saw my father talking to a young man. The young man was dressed in a white uniform and was standing on my father's right hand. The strange thing was that my father did not look like my real father, but deep inside me, I knew he was my father.

'Father!' I called loudly, 'Helen sank beneath the black water! She will drown! Help her!'

My father nodded. Immediately, He sent the young man to save her. The young man ran like a deer; he dove into the black water, and in a few moments, he resurfaced holding the old woman in his hands. He lifted her, with ease, and gently laid her body on the wharf. I looked at her carefully. She was not breathing. She was dead. But, as the young man held her in his hands, something miraculous happened. Helen's old face, which was full of wrinkles, suddenly became young, and her chest moved as she began to breathe again. Oh! She became so young and beautiful! I was filled with joy."

When I woke up, I thanked God for hearing my prayers for Helen. According to that vision, I knew He would save her. I thanked God for sending His Son to save the world (John 3:3-7,16).

It wasn't long after that vision, when Helen had the following experience:

She was home alone watching TV, when suddenly, she saw the Lord, dressed in a white robe, standing next to the tele-

vision set. He had a smile on His face, and His arms were open towards her. Helen, moved by this vision, gave her life to the Lord and accepted Him as her personal Lord and Savior. The eighty-one-year-old Helen was born again! Halleluiah!

About two years later, Helen had a dream from the Lord. She saw the Lord as tall as a mountain. The stars of heaven decorated His robe. The Lord spoke and told her,

“Helen, it is time for you to come home, child!”

In the morning, Helen phoned her daughter and asked her to come to the house. When her daughter arrived, Helen told her about the dream. She told her daughter how excited she was. Then she showed her daughter where she kept the money for the funeral expenses, and the dress she had prepared for her last trip.

Her daughter tried to convince her that her death would not take place; after all, mother was a healthy woman. But Helen was insistent. She asked her daughter to take her to the hospital because, as she explained, she would not like to die at home. As mother persisted in her request, the daughter gave in. On the way to the hospital, any tension was broken by the way in which they joked, giggled, and laughed.

In the hospital, the doctor examined Helen and found her quite healthy. She certainly had no sickness that would cause her death. Nevertheless, because she continued to insist, the doctor humored the old lady by agreeing to keep her in the hospital overnight for observation.

As she and her daughter were sitting in the room, Helen said again how happy she was that the time had arrived for her to go “home”. She requested that her daughter tell her story to the rest of the family, and to relate to them the fact that she was happy to go. Then she began to sing hymns and, like a child, to clap her hands with joy.

When the daughter saw that, she went out in the hallway to find the doctor.

“Doctor,” she said, “what’s wrong with my mother? Has she lost her mind?”

“No!” replied the doctor, “Your mother has not lost her mind. Neither is she ill. Therefore, we cannot help her. Perhaps your mother has foreseen her death and is happy to go.”

That night, Helen, my mother, lay in bed and went to sleep. Without pain, without fear, and without tears, she left this world and went to the Lord. May the Name of the Lord be praised both now and forever.

The dream about Grace

I knew Grace for many years. She would not open her heart for the Lord to enter (Revelation 3:20). But I, being a friend, did not give up praying for her salvation. One night, the Lord gave me the following prophetic dream:

“I was standing on the Street in front of my house. There, I saw a large pothole about 30 inches wide by six or seven feet long. This pothole was filled with mud and dirty water. I realized that this pothole must detract from the neat ap-

pearance of my house. I felt embarrassed that people would notice this filthy mess right in front of my home.

I wanted to cover it up with something. At that moment, a floor mat appeared in my hand. I used the mat to cover the pothole. Temporarily, the appearance of my house was improved, and I felt content. Unfortunately, it did not take long before a vehicle drove over the pothole and made a mess out of it and of the floor mat. That made me very sad. What could I do to avoid embarrassment?

I took a step towards the house. My wife suddenly appeared next to me.

“Costa,” she said to me, “I know you love Grace very much, but don’t you think it’s time to call the ambulance to take her dead body away? It will not be long before a bad smell fills the air.”

“What dead body?” I asked.

“Grace’s dead body that lies in that pothole!” she answered.

I looked at the pothole again. I became very sad when I saw Grace’s dead body lying in the mud and dirty water.

The appearance of the body was very strange. It was not three-dimensional. It was as flat and thin as the floor mat. Also, it was covered with, and sealed in, three layers of ice. But the ice was cracked and broken, and parts of her corpse were now exposed. Surely, I thought, it would not take long before an unbearable stench filled the air around the body.

“You’re right!” I said to my wife. “Let’s go into the house and call an ambulance right away.”

Once inside, I picked up the phone while my wife stood at the front window looking at the pothole.

“Costa!” she yelled, “Come and see this!”

I ran to the window and looked outside. Oh! What a sight! I saw a young man kneeling in the pothole. He wore a white robe. He had lifted Grace’s dead body over His knees and held it in His arms, just as a father holds his child. He was looking, with a loving expression, at Grace’s face. The ice was no longer there.

Speechless, I continued to look as Grace’s flat body began to expand and to look three-dimensional. I observed that her chest moved as **a new breath of life entered her dead body**. A voice said to me, **“He is the resurrection!”** (John 11:25).

Barefooted, but filled with joy, I ran outside and went towards them. The Lord had helped Grace to stand on her own feet. Grace looked very weak, but the Lord supported her with His hands so that she would not fall again. I hugged both with love and joy.

Then, the Lord placed Grace very gently into my arms. Now, I was supposed to support her.

“Costa,” said the Lord, “take care of Grace and feed her.” (John 21:15-17; Mark 5:43).

Oh ... I was very excited! "Lord," I said, "I do have a lot of food to spare; I also have French Onion Soup!"

The Lord laughed!

Then he looked into my eyes and said, "Costa, not that kind of food; feed her with my kind of food."

A few days later, I met Grace. I observed that the Lord had already "resurrected" her. Her heart and mind were open to accept the word of God. Grace accepted Jesus as her personal God and Savior and passed from death into life. She was born again! I thanked the Lord for removing the three layers of ice from Grace's body, soul, and spirit (John 5:24; 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24).

The wreath of thorns

The ministry of prayer has enriched my Christian life, and I recommend it to all the believers in Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:17). I'm sure that all of us have encountered problems and hardships. From personal experience, I know that we Christians give all our problems to the Lord Jesus Christ because He can take care of them, and to give us strength to overcome them, because "stronger is He who is in us" (Matthew 11:28,29; 1 John 4:4).

We also know that there isn't a problem big enough to separate us from the love of Christ. The apostle Paul wrote,

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels

nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:35-39).

When I encountered hardships in my life, the Lord Jesus, like a good Friend, was always there to show me His sympathy and to give me the courage to endure them. The following testimony is dedicated to those of the body of Christ who are experiencing tribulations and sorrows:

The telephone rang. It was 8:25 in the morning. My wife, my eldest son, and I woke up to horrible news: The person on the phone told us that our restaurant was on fire. When we arrived there, the firemen had already extinguished the flames. Everything in the dining room was burnt. Oh ... it is very hard to describe the feelings and the depth of our sorrow and pain!

Three days later, our eldest son woke up looking very ill. He was bleeding internally. The upper part of his mouth had many blisters which were full of blood. The internal bleeding could be easily seen under the skin. An operation would be necessary to keep him alive. The operation was a success, but, in the following two days we nearly lost him twice because of blood clots.

On the day of the operation, I left my wife to look after him in hospital, while I took our second son to the children's hospital. He had to see a specialist about his spine; he began to suffer from a severe case of scoliosis. In a short period of time, the top part of his spine curved from left to right and the lower spine curved from right to left creating two curves of seventy-two degrees each. An operation was

necessary to support the spine with two metal rods. Without this operation, if he would not die, he would be permanently confined to a wheelchair by the time he was twenty-two.

At the same time, as the restaurant had closed because of the fire, our financial situation gave us additional problems. We had no income coming in, and it was very difficult to keep the mortgage corporation happy.

That was the hardest period of my life. Our prayers were delivered non-stop. Nevertheless, I can honestly say that these hardships strengthened our faith and our trust in God. When my soul was extremely depressed and tired, the Lord Jesus gave me encouragement through the following dream:

“I saw the Lord standing in front of me. He looked rather pale and weak, and on His head, He wore the wreath of thorns. He looked at me with love and sympathy. He removed the wreath and showed it to me. ‘Costa,’ He asked, ‘do you know what this is?’

‘Yes, Lord,’ I replied, ‘I do. It is the wreath of thorns.’

‘Do you know the reason I wore it? Do you understand its meaning?’

‘No, Lord,’ I replied, ‘I do not know.’

‘Costa,’ said the Lord, ‘the day I died, I was surrounded with many hardships and tribulations. The wreath of thorns which encircled my head pictured just that. Each thorn which penetrated my skin symbolized a specific hardship that caused me pain. Today, you are experiencing tribula-

tions. Being surrounded with sorrows, it is as if you were wearing your wreath of thorns. One thorn that gives you pain is the burnt restaurant; another thorn, is the sickness of your first son; another thorn is the sickness of your second son; another thorn is your poor economic situation. But, Costa, I would like you to remember one thing: After I wore my wreath of thorns, the glory came.”

I thank the Lord Jesus for being a personal God who is interested in the problems of each of His children. I praise the Name of the Lord for allowing me to keep my children. I hope that He will bring them all to Himself so that they can experience Him personally. I place them into His able hands.

If you, Dear Reader, have family members who have not yet come to the Lord, pray for them. You may not live long enough to see them saved, but trust that God will save them because He answers prayers (Matthew 7:7).

Epilogue

Writing this book has been an intensely emotional experience. As I drew (inadequately) the pictures which illustrated the dreams I received from the Holy Spirit, I felt that I was opening a window for you to see my inner world. I felt I had invited you to visit my innermost room, where the Spirit of God dwells.

At times, selfishly, my carnal self told me not to publicize my spiritual experiences. I felt that way because I was aware of how some Christians feel about people who claim that they have dreams and visions from God. However, my Christian love for you demanded that I should, for your benefit, and for the glory of the Living Jesus.

Also, I was told by other men not to reveal my personal experiences. I was asked to relate the points of truth mentioned in this book, without revealing that I came to this understanding through dreams and visions. Would I have been true to myself if I had done this? Would I not have usurped the work of the Holy Spirit and presented it as my own? Wouldn't this act have revealed pride? Why should I hide the method that God used to bring me to Jesus, to life, and to freedom? Should I be ashamed of the work He did in my life? God forbid! Should I keep these experiences to myself so that I will not offend those who believe that this

type of phenomena has ceased since the death of the apostles? Of course not! Perhaps the time has come for this part of the body of Christ, after they test the spirit of this book, to reconsider.

As for me, I am determined to declare the works of the Lord (Psalms 118:17).

These experiences strengthened my faith in Christ; why could they not strengthen the faith of others? Jesus said, *“What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light; and what you hear in the ear, that preach ye from the house-tops.”* (Matthew 10:27).

I am hopeful that the dreams and visions I have recorded in this book have broadened and deepened your spiritual insight. If that happened, praise God. The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews wrote, *“But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil.”* (Hebr. 5:14).

The things I wrote are not myths, neither are they imaginings of my mind; they are events which I, my family, and the people involved, experienced.

I did not write this book only to describe my spiritual experiences, but to draw your attention to the things they revealed. These experiences revealed:

- a) The darkness, hypocrisy, injustice, hate, and fanaticism of the cult to which I once belonged.
- b) They exposed “Mercury” and how people could be misled by his appearance because he stands and says that he is

the only messenger from God who can guide mankind into all truth --- a work which is done exclusively by the Holy Spirit (Chapter 6). And God help us, because today we are surrounded with many Mercury-like religious organizations!

c) The imaginary “Mother” --- that abominable idol that cripples the personal relationship with God of those who follow “her” (chapter 7).

d) The fact that Satan hides himself in the “salt of the earth” which has been trapped in his religious yard (chapter 9).

e) The “snake-dove”, Satan’s “bride”, who kills the spirituality of those who trust “her” instead of trusting God (Chapter 9).

f) The twisted and laborious religious road.

g) The only true Way that Christians must follow --- Jesus, the One who brings rest and **freedom** to those who follow Him.

All my dreams and visions pointed to Jesus. All my experiences glorified Jesus and turned the hopes of the reader towards Him. None of my dreams or visions contradicted the Bible; on the contrary, they were supported by it. Praise God!

Some people have become discouraged because they hear others say that God does not answer prayers today, that He is not active, or that He has a “hands off” policy. If you have been discouraged in the past, I hope that my book has

changed you. Look up to God. He is alive and active today. Pray to Him --- He listens. Take the advice of the apostle Paul:

“Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things, hold fast that which is good.” (1 Thessalonians 5:17-21).

If you are a Witness of Jehovah, do not be afraid of the things your religious leaders will say about this book. They might be nice people, and they might have a form of godliness, but they deny its power (2 Timothy 3:5). This book was not inspired by the archenemy of God and mankind. Satan does not lead people to the Truth required for salvation. Satan’s work is exactly the opposite (2 Corinthians 4:4).

You may feel that you already follow Jesus; but the Jesus of the Watchtower Society is not the Jesus of the Bible. **The Watchtower Jesus is a product of God’s creative power just like Satan.** The Jesus of the Bible is the **ONLY BEGOTTEN SON OF GOD**. This expression means what it says: **Jesus is the only Son of God’s essence** --- not the only son of God’s creative power! And this is true because the “Word”, the prehuman Jesus, was Himself that creative power of God. God **spoke** everything into existence. **Therefore, the “Word” of God created all things;** and this “Word” of God who is Living and Active (Hebrews 4:12,13) became flesh and we know Him as the Man Jesus (Genesis 1:3; John 1:1-4,14). If you want to know Him better, I encourage you to study my book **“Jesus - God by Nature”**, in which I present and explain the Watchtower’s

many mistakes on this serious subject. If you are a Truth-lover, please, study it.

If you Dear Reader are a Christian with a good personal relationship with the Lord, and if you fellowship in a Christian Church, do not be troubled over the distinct separation I draw between the words “**Religion**” and “**Church**”. It is a God-given understanding and fully backed up by Scripture. Also, I hope you have understood the kind of **freedom** I have proclaimed in this book, and that you will hold fast in your mind the words of the apostle Paul, which he wrote for the Church:

“For, brothers, you were called to freedom. Only do not use the freedom for gain to the flesh” (Galatians 5:13),

and,

“Then, stand firm in the freedom with which Christ made us free, and do not again be held with a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1).

God bless you!

Jesus Invites You

Dear Reader,

I would like to thank you for taking the time to read this book. In a powerful way, I presented to you the freedom and rest that Jesus brings to all those who believe in Him and who follow Him. If you are one of those who have not yet accepted the Lord Jesus as their personal God and Savior, now that you have received a considerable knowledge through this book, I would like you to consider the following:

In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus invites the people to come to Him. There, we read:

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

Jesus, who is the True God and Savior, (2 Peter 1:1), said,

“Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him”
(Revelation 3:20)

From the above words, we realize that Jesus is good, polite, and meek. He does not try to force anyone to open the “door” and to receive Him as his/her God and Savior.

However, if people, out of their own free will, open the “door” of their heart and invite Him to come in, Jesus, the One who is the Omnipresent God (John 1:51), will come in and dwell inside them.

Because Jesus is not a created being, but One of the True Godhead YHWH, He does not come into one’s heart alone. The Father, who is in the Son (John 14:8-11), comes in also. The Lord Jesus said,

“...If a man loves me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come into him, and make our abode with him.” (John 14:23).

The Father and the Son dwell inside those who believe in the True Jesus of the bible through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9-11). Therefore, **the believer becomes God’s dwelling place, the temple of God**. This is the reason the apostle Paul said to the Christians in Corinth,

“Do you not know that you are God’s temple, and the Spirit of God dwells in you? ... the temple of God is holy, which temple, you are.” (1 Corinthians 3:16,17).

Also, the moment one believes in the True Jesus of the Bible and the Spirit of God dwells in him/her, that person:

- a) **Is saved from the penalty of his/her sin and he/she has everlasting life** (Matthew 1:21; John 3:16). **What a sweet freedom!**
- b) **Is born-again --- is born from above** (John 3:3-8).

- c) **Has direct access to God** through the Holy Spirit who prays on his/her behalf (Romans 8:26,27) and through Jesus Christ, our High Priest, the One who gave His body in order to make holy **all those who will believe in Him** (Hebrews 4:14-16; 10:10-14).
- d) Becomes a **child of God --- what a relationship!** (John 3:3-5; 1:12,13; Romans 8:14-16).
- e) Becomes a **“new creation”** (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- f) Becomes part of the **“body of Christ”**, of the body which recognizes Jesus as the only **“Head”** (Romans 12:4,5; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:12-17; Ephesians 1:22; 5:23).
- g) Becomes one of those who comprise the **“Bride”** of Christ who is the **“Bridegroom”** (2 Corinthians 11:1; Revelation 19:7).
- h) Becomes a **holy priest**, one of those who comprise a **Holy Priesthood**, a **“royal priesthood”**, an **“elect race”**, a **“holy nation”**, a **“people for possession”** (1 Peter 2:4,5,9). As royal priesthood, they have the right, the **“authority”**, to preach, to teach, to baptize (Matthew 28:18-20), to distribute the bread and the wine, and to do whatever is part of the worship they offer **as priests of God and of Christ** (Revelation 20:6).
- i) Becomes a **king** who will rule with Christ (Revelation 20:6).
- j) Becomes a member of **the Church** of Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus loves His Church and *“gave Himself up on its behalf, that He might sanctify it ... that He might present it to Himself as the glorious assembly, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such things, but that it be holy and without blemish.”* (Ephesians 5:25-27).

From the above, we realize that it is impossible for those who do not know Jesus to even imagine the glory that awaits those who believe in Him. The apostle Paul said, *“according as it has been written, “Eye has not seen, and ear has not heard,” nor has it risen up into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those that love Him. But God revealed them to us by His Spirit”* (1 Corinthians 2:9.10a).

Therefore, Dear Reader, I would like you to pay close attention to the following questions:

- a) Would you like to be part of this glory?
- b) Would you like to have your sins forgiven?
- c) Would you like to be saved?
- d) Would you like to have everlasting life?
- e) Would you like to have an interactive relationship with your Creator?

If your answer to the above questions is “Yes!” please pay attention to the following. In Romans 10:9 and 13, the apostle Paul preaches that:

- a) **If you will confess with your mouth** that Jesus is the “**Lord**” (in other words, the “Lord” or “YHWH” of verse 13, whose name you must call upon to be saved),
- b) **If you will believe in your heart** that God the Father **raised Him bodily** from the dead, and
- c) **If you will call upon the Name of Jesus**, in other words, if you pray to Jesus, **you will be saved at that very moment!**

The above **requirements for salvation** are the very core, the foundation of the good news that the apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ preached (Romans 10:8). For this reason, Dear Reader,

- a) If you personally have seen the glory of the Lord Jesus and if you, out of your own free will, confess with your mouth that Jesus is the “Lord” (the YHWH) of verse 13, and
- b) If you have believed in your heart that although He died on the cross and was buried God the Father raised Him on the third day from the dead according to the Scriptures (Isaiah chapter 53), **call on His name**, in other words, **pray to Jesus at this very moment** (Romans 10:13). **Pray to Jesus to start having a personal relationship with Him and ask Him to become your God and Savior** (Titus 2:13)! Now, at this very moment, make the greatest decision of your life because your everlasting life or your everlasting condemnation depends on it (John 3:18)!

If you have accepted this invitation, if you prayed to the Lord Jesus and asked Him to be your God and Savior, the following words of the apostle Paul are directed to you also:

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.” (2 Corinthians 13:13).

This invitation is also extended to all those who may have been going to a church for many years, but who have not yet fulfilled the above requirements for salvation.

For better understanding about salvation, please read my book:

“THE GOSPEL OF SALVATION”

You can read it or download it FREE of charge.

<https://thebiblestudy.ca/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/THE->

Appendix A

Do you follow False Prophets?

The Lord Jesus knew that Satan would try to mislead His saved followers by sending them false prophets and false christs. For this reason, Jesus warned them:

“Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there: believe it not. For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold I have told you before. Wherefore, if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth; behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not” (Matthew 24:23-27).

The above admonition of the Lord is not to be taken lightly by those who value their spiritual wellbeing and by those who want to do His will.

Jesus did not say that false christs and false prophets would use force and say to their listeners, **“We are false prophets! We are false christs! Follow us!”** If they were to do this, perhaps nobody would ever follow them. The words of our Lord, *“... if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect”*, signify that the false prophets and the false “anointed” ones, in other words, the false christs, would be

slick, polite, Christian-like, having a form of godliness, always showing an ever-burning desire to come to the “full knowledge of the truth”, to “serve” and to “please” God. For this reason, the Lord’s admonition should not be ignored.

Today, there are millions of people who have been misled by those who were proven **false prophets** since the 1800’s, such as C.T. Russell of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. However, there is no reason for anyone to continue to be misled by them because today there is enough information and evidence available to expose their given false prophecies. Those who have been misled should become responsible before the Lord and, after they check out the facts carefully as the Bereans did (Acts 17:11), make a serious decision to follow the True Prophet and Christ, in order to be set free.

The false prophets have many common characteristics. **Even after their prophecies fail**, they continue to:

- a) Present themselves as **God’s “anointed”**.
- b) Present **false doctrines**.
- c) Present **extra-Biblical knowledge** which they say they have received through dreams, visions, or **angels**, but which **contradicts** the Bible.
- d) **Change the Bible** or add to it to make it agree with their false doctrines.
- e) **Exercise authority** over those they have misled.
- f) Condition their followers **to depend on them**.

- g) Impart **guilt**.
- h) Instill religious **fear**.
- i) Instill **religious fanaticism**.
- j) Undermine and **pervert the gospel of Jesus Christ that liberates** those who follow Him from all kinds of **religious slavery**.
- k) **Pervert the gospel of the glory of Jesus** (2 Corinthians 4:4), who is God over all and blessed forever (Romans 9:5; Greek text). They try to demote Him from His Godly glory and **present Him as a created being, the brother of Satan, or as Michael the archangel**. They ignore the fact that Michael's authority was less than Satan's because **he did not dare** to rebuke Satan, but said, "**Let the Lord** (another Lord) **rebuke you!**" (Jude 9).

The Jehovah's Witnesses fulfill all the above. **The foregoing is not an exaggeration**. Allow me to present a few examples. For instance, let us examine the characteristic **(d)**, where I said that they "**Change the Bible** or add to it in order to make it agree with their false doctrines."

The Jehovah's Witnesses, who do not believe that Jesus is God by nature, have **altered** their "Bible" in many places. One of them is **John 1:4**. There, we read from the text of the Koine Greek:

“ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν”
In him life was

The above should be translated into English as:

“In Him was life”

The Greek word “ἐν» (en) means “***in, inside***” (See Greek dictionary Dimitrakou, page 528). Also, the word “ἦν” (een) means “***was***” and it refers to the unlimited past (always was).

The Jehovah’s Witnesses do not wish to admit that **life was always “in” (within) Jesus**. To do so, would confirm the fact that **Jesus is God** and this truth would conflict with their false doctrine that Jesus is a created angel, the brother of Satan (Watchtower 3/1/1932, page 76, paragraphs 2,3). For this reason, in their “bible” they have correctly translated **only the last three words**, i.e., “***Him was life***”. What happened to the word “***In***”? What did they do to this word?

Without a trace of responsible scholarship, without any respect for the original Greek text and without fear of God, they got rid of it and **replaced it with a completely new phrase** which **is not** the English translation of the Greek word “ἐν” (in). The new phrase reads:

“What has come into existence by means of”!

I wonder, which Greek English Dictionary informed them that the Greek word “ἐν” (in) actually means “***What has come into existence by means of***”!

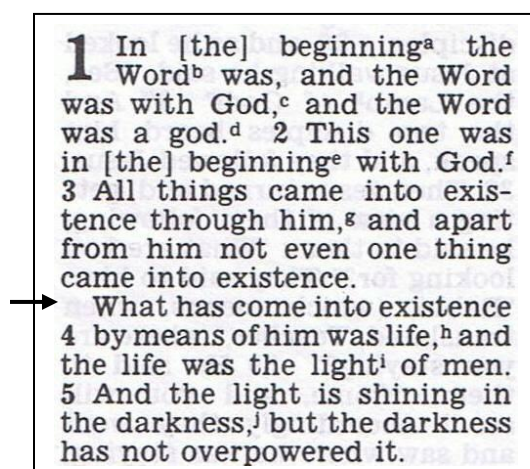
Very deviously, they have not included the foregoing phrase in verse **4**, nor have they included it in verse **3**! They

left part of it hanging between verses 3 and 4, and their complete sentence now reads:

“What has come into existence by means of him was life”.

The above sentence does not contain, neither does it express, the truth of the written word of God which tells us that *“In Him was life”!* I hope that those of the Jehovah’s Witnesses **who know the Greek language and who love the truth**, will get rid of the religious fear the organization of the publishing house they follow has instilled in them, and that **they will defend the written word of God.**

Here is a photocopy of their intentional mistranslation:



1 In [the] beginning^a the Word^b was, and the Word was with God,^c and the Word was a god.^d 2 This one was in [the] beginning^e with God.^f 3 All things came into existence through him,^g and apart from him not even one thing came into existence. → What has come into existence 4 by means of him was life,^h and the life was the lightⁱ of men. 5 And the light is shining in the darkness,^j but the darkness has not overpowered it.

I do not wish anyone to think that the above photocopy presents an accidental error they’ve made in their English translation only. For this reason, on the next page, I present a photocopy of the same verse from their **Greek edition** of their Bible (as if the Greek people needed a translation of

the Bible from an English version of the New Testament into Greek! I wonder if someone forgot that the New Testament was first written in the Greek language!) Anyway, again, here is a photocopy of their intentional mistranslation:

1 Στην αρχή ήταν ο Λόγος, και ο Λόγος ήταν μαζί με τον Θεό, και ο Λόγος ήταν Θεός. 2 Αυτός ήταν στην αρχή μαζί με τον Θεό. 3 Τα πάντα ήρθαν σε ύπαρξη μέσω αυτού, και χωρίς αυτόν δεν ήρθε σε ύπαρξη ούτε ένα πράγμα.

→ Εκείνο που έχει έρθει σε ύπαρξη μέσω αυτού ήταν ζωή, και η ζωή ήταν το φως των ανθρώπων. 5 Και το φως λάμπει μέσα στο σκοτάδι, αλλά το σκοτάδι δεν έχει υπερισχύσει εναντίον του.

6 Εγέρθηκε ένας άνθρωπος ο οποίος στάλθηκε ως εκπρόσωπος του Θεού: το όνομά του ήταν Ιωάννης.

How could those who are Truth-lovers **trust** the above so-called Bible “translation”? How could one trust his/her eternity in the hands of men who do not have any respect for biblical truth? How is it possible to trust false teachers? Is it possible that false teachers will lead their followers to the True Jesus of the Bible who is **“God over all and blessed forever”** (Romans 9:5; from the Greek text) **in order to pray to Him**, in other words, **to call on His name** in order to be saved (Romans 10:13)? If the answer is “Yes!”, then how is it that the Bible warns us that false teachers will be among us **“who will secretly bring in destructive**

heresies, and denying the Master who has bought them, bringing swift destruction on themselves.” (2 Peter 2:1)?

Although it is hard work for those who do not know the koine Greek to detect translation errors, it takes less effort to recognize false prophets. Let us consider the following:

To prophesy (Greek: “προφητεύω” [prophitevo]), means to foretell a future event. Therefore, all we must do in this case is **to review the record of those who pose as prophets**. In fact, this is what the Watchtower advised their followers to do! In the Watchtower 4/1/72, page 197, they wrote:

“However, Jehovah...had a “prophet” to warn them. This “prophet” was not one man, but was a body of men and women...Today, they are known as Jehovah’s Christian Witnesses....Of course, it is easy to say that this group acts as a “prophet” of God. It is another thing to prove it. **The only way that this can be done is to review the record.** What does it show?”

All right then, **let us review their record:**

In their book “The Time is at Hand”, 1908, page 101, they wrote: “...the Kingdom of God is already began in A.D. 1878, and that the “battle of the great day of God Almighty” (Rev. 16:14), which **will end in A.D. 1914** with the overthrow of earth’s present rulership is already commenced.”

The above is a false prophecy! The end did not come in 1914 A.D.

In the same book, page 170, they wrote: "...the Times of the Gentiles...**will run fully out with the year A.D. 1914**, and that at that time they will all be overturned **and Christ's Kingdom fully established.**"

The above is a false prophecy! Christ's Kingdom was not established in 1914!

In "The Golden Age", 6/6/23, page 563, they predicted a new date. They wrote: "The dissolving of Satan's empire began in the world war; and there is no possible restoration of any crumbling kingdom, but rather the crushing, disintegrating process continues until all shall cease to function. **The Scriptures seem to limit this transition period to eleven years, from 1914 to and including 1925.**"

The above is a false prophecy! Satan's empire did not end in 1925!

In the WT 9/11/22, page 262, they wrote: "The date **1925** is even more distinctly indicated by the Scriptures than 1914."

The above is a false prophecy! 1925 came and went!

In the WT 4/1/23, page 106, they wrote: "Our thought is, that **1925 is definitely settled by the Scriptures...**As to Noah, the Christian now has much more upon which to base his faith than Noah had upon to base his faith in a coming deluge."

The above is a false prophecy! Their prediction about 1925 failed!

In 1921 and 1922, they prophesied that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and other faithful ones **would be resurrected in the year 1925**. They wrote:

“The chief thing to be restored is the human race to life; and since the other Scriptures definitely fix the fact that **there will be a resurrection of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and other faithful ones of old, and that these will have the first favor, we may expect 1925 to witness the return of these faithful men of Israel from the condition of death, being resurrected** and fully restored to perfect humanity and made the visible, legal representatives of the new order of things on earth, right here in Jerusalem.” (The Golden Age, 3/18/21, page 381, under the subtitle “The Jubilee”, paragraph 3).

The above is a false prophecy! Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, did not come back to life in 1925!

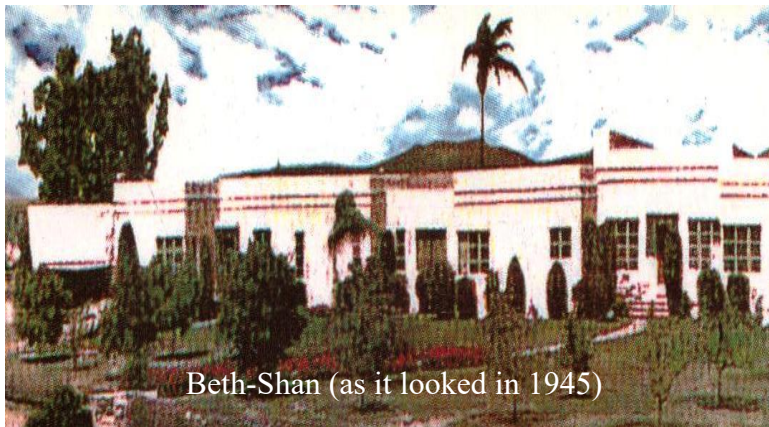
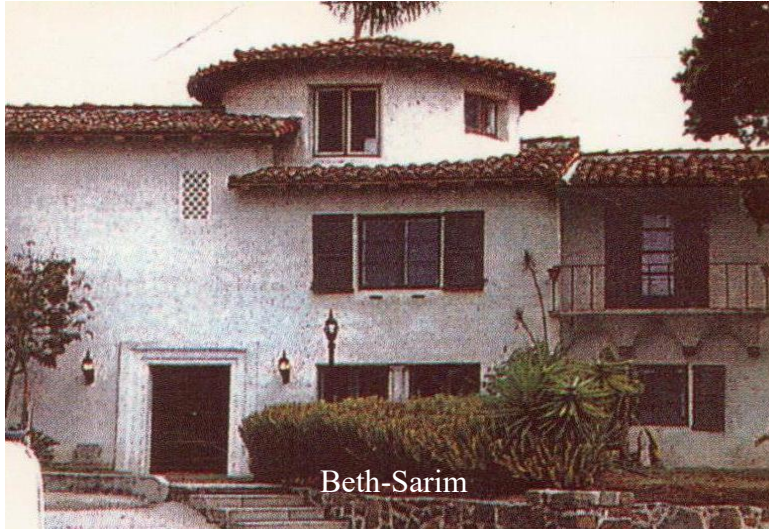
And in “The Golden Age”, 3/1/22, page 350, paragraph 1, they wrote: “...lo, our King is here, and **the year 1925 marks the date when all shall see His mighty power demonstrated in the resurrection of the ancient worthies, and the time when ‘millions now living will never die.’”**

The above paragraph contains two of the greatest false prophecies of the last two thousand years!

The foregoing false prophecy regarding the resurrection of the “ancient worthies”, i.e., Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc., was firmly believed by the leaders of the organization at that time. They put their beliefs into tangible practice. They built two mansions in San Diego, California, in order to

house the resurrected “ancient worthies”. **They even titled these properties to the ancient worthies!** The first mansion was called “Beth-Sarim” which means “house of Princes” and the second “Beth-Shan” which means “house of security”.

Here I present a picture of “Beth-Sarim” and one of “Beth-Shan”:



The above mansions became monuments to their false prophecy!

How many times does a person have to commit murder in order to be a convicted murderer? **Once!** How many times does a person have to prophesy falsely in order to be a convicted false prophet? **Once!** Now that we have reviewed their record, as they encouraged us to do, what does it show? I will let **you** be the judge!

At this point it would be interesting to read their comments from the Awake 10/8/68, page 23. They wrote:

“True, there have been those in times past who predicted an “end” to the world, even announcing a specific date ... Yet, nothing happened. They were guilty of false prophesying. Why? What was missing? ... Missing from such people were God’s truths and the evidence that He was using them.”!!!

And Jesus said, ***“...by your words you will be condemned.”*** (Matthew 12:37)

Jehovah’s Witnesses who fanatically wish to defend their Mother Organization are saying that their leaders had never prophesied falsely, that they only had **“wrong expectations”**. To these people I will say: “If you were to apply the same excuse to all the false prophets of all ages, there would not be one false prophet - **ever!**”

Other Witnesses have told me about their leaders, **“Our brothers are very humble. They admit that they have made mistakes in the past.”** To those who think likewise I will say: **“Jesus did not make any distinction between**

humble false prophets and arrogant ones. In Matthew 24 He did not say to his followers that it is okay to follow or to believe humble false prophets!" False prophets are false prophets! Whatever excuses they might give after their "prophecies" fail to be fulfilled, they should never be able to get rid of the stigma. When their "prophecies" fail to be fulfilled, they should be marked, at once, as false prophets so that they will not be believed or followed by those who wish to know and to serve God.

Those of the Jehovah's Witnesses who love the Truth (John 14:6), should cast out their religious fear (1 John 4:18) and **obey** the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 24:23-27). It is then that they will stop believing, following, supporting and exulting false prophets.

Now is the time for them to study the Holy Scriptures (not the translation of the false prophets), in order to recognize the True Jesus of the Bible. Now is the time to stop believing and following the false Jesus the false prophets have presented to them. The false Jesus of the Watchtower who is a created being, Michael the archangel and the brother of Satan (Watchtower 3/1/1932, page 76, paragraphs 2,3), does not have the power to save anyone! Only those who believe in God's **only begotten** (not only created) **Son** have everlasting life (John 3:16; 8:24). "**Only begotten**" does not mean "**only created**"! Those who do not believe in the True Jesus of the Bible cannot honor the Son **exactly the same** as they honor the Father (John 5:23). Those who have not recognized the fact that Jesus is God in the flesh (John 1:1,14), cannot confess with their mouth that **He is the "Lord", the YHWH of Romans 10:9,13 whose Name they must call upon** (must pray to) **in order to be saved**. Now is the time to believe, to follow, to obey, to support and to

exult the True Jesus of the Bible who is the True Prophet and Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity (2 Peter 3:18; Revelation 5:13)!

Appendix B

Should Christians Keep the Sabbath?

It is not my intention to fully explain the subject of Sabbath-keeping in this Appendix; to accomplish that I would have to write another book. However, I found it necessary to raise a few important points because I believe that the doctrine of the keeping of the seventh-day Sabbath is an attempt to enslave under the Old Testament Law not only the Gentile Christians (a thing that it is impossible to be accomplished without circumcision), but also those of the circumcision whom the Lord Jesus has set free (Galatians 4:4,5).

The doctrine which declares that Christians must keep the seventh-day Sabbath, **perverts the gospel of grace**, enslaves believers, imparts fear and guilt and it is not based on the New Testament. So are the relative doctrines which imply that:

1. In the last days, the faith and obedience of Christians will be tested.
2. The test will be the keeping of the Sabbath.
3. Their salvation will depend on whether they have kept the Sabbath.

4. The Sabbath is the “**seal of God**”.
5. Those who worship God on the first day of the week have received the “**mark of the beast**”!

Those who declare the foregoing false teachings, ignore the fact that the “seal” with which Christians are sealed for the day of redemption, is **the Holy Spirit** (Ephesians 4:30; 1:13,14; 2 Corinthians 1:22).

If the Body of Christ were to observe the seventh-day Sabbath, which guidelines must they follow in order to observe it? According to the guidelines of the Old Testament, or the rules of the New? The New Testament says that if Christians keep the Law of the Old Testament, they will be under condemnation --- they will be cursed (Galatians 3:10). On the other hand, if we must observe the seventh-day Sabbath according to New Testament guidelines, **are there any?** The answer is “**NO!**”

Some might say we must follow the example of our Lord Jesus who kept the Sabbath. Are they forgetting the fact that Jesus was born “under the law” (Galatians 4:4), and that He was **circumcised** as prescribed by the law? (Luke 2:21) Yet, if Christians circumcise, Paul said that “Christ will be of no benefit” to them (Galatians 5:2,3).

Did those who believed in Christ in the first days of the Church have to keep the seventh-day Sabbath to be saved, to be filled with the Holy Spirit, and to enjoy a personal relationship with God? The answer is “**No!**” They enjoyed all the above because of their faith in Jesus --- not because of works of the law (Galatians 3:2). **Why would God change the requirement for salvation today?** Those who

believe so have not fully understood the depth of the grace of God, neither have they realized who was to keep the Old Testament Law and why.

It was on Mount Sinai (Horeb) where God made a covenant with Israel, the people He delivered from Egypt. God wrote this covenant on two tables of stone. **This covenant was the Ten Commandments** (Exodus 34:28; Deuteronomy 4:13). **God did not make this Covenant with Adam.** Therefore, God did not command the entire human race to keep the seventh day of the week in order to remember His rest. Neither did God make this Covenant with Noah, nor with Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob. **It was made only with those at Horeb** (Sinai). In Deuteronomy 5:2,3, we read:

“The Lord our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. The Lord did not make this covenant with our fathers, but with us, with all of those of us alive here today.”

Those who became “the covenant people” at Sinai, were **the circumcised** descendants of their patriarch Abraham. In Genesis 17, God made a covenant with Abram. God said to him,

“I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly...Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham...And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you...As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your de-

scendants after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep between me and you and your descendants after you; Every male among you shall be circumcised...and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you...So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.” (verses 1-14)

Other scriptures which show the importance of circumcision are Exodus 4:24-26; Joshua 5:2-5.

In Leviticus 12:3 God repeated the commandment of circumcision, **indicating its importance in the Sinaitic Covenant**. The rule was clear: A person, who would enter the covenant and keep it, **had to** be circumcised! For instance, if a foreigner wanted to participate in the Passover celebration, the law said:

“This is the ordinance of the Passover: no foreigner is to eat of it;...if a stranger sojourns with you, and celebrates the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come to celebrate it;...But no uncircumcised person may eat of it.” (Exodus 12:43,44,48).

From the foregoing verses we realize that without circumcision in the flesh, **no one could keep --- not even the smallest part --- of the Mosaic Law! An uncircumcised person was not even allowed to go near the Passover table to partake from it! A supposed “spiritual circumcision of the heart”, as some claim, was not sufficient!** For this reason, those who previously were Pharisees and had kept the Law of Moses in all their lives, and who now had

believed in Christ, said that the Gentile Christians **ought to be circumcised** in order to keep the Law of Moses.

In view of the above, let's examine Acts 15. In verse 5, we read:

“But some believers who belonged to the party of the Pharisees rose up and said, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them (the Gentiles who had become Christians) and to charge them to keep the law of Moses.’”

From the above we see that it was well understood that **without circumcision in the flesh, no one had the right to keep the law**. It is evident that those early believers who had belonged to the party of the Pharisees, continued, at least for a while, to keep the Law of Moses. Because their understanding was not yet clear on this matter, they thought that those who became Christians from the nations had to do the same. For this reason, the apostles and the elders were gathered to consider this matter (Acts 15:6). After they had a big debate, Peter said to them:

“Brethren, you know that in the early days God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us (who have kept the law of Moses) and them (who have never kept the law, being uncircumcised Gentiles), but cleansed their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we shall be

saved through the grace of our Lord Jesus, just as they will.” (Verses 7-11)

It is clear from the above that the apostle Peter, who was filled with the Holy Spirit, **set a standard** for the uncircumcised Gentiles who joined the Church:

They did not have to keep the law of Moses in order to receive God’s saving grace and therefore, they did not have to be circumcised!

The apostles and the elders did not get together to decide which “**part**” of the Law of Moses the Gentile Christians would have to keep, but whether they had to keep **the whole law**. **They understood that the person who keeps one part of the law must keep the whole law or else he would be cursed** (Galatians 3:10). Therefore, the debate attacked the very foundation of the matter: **Circumcision!**

Circumcision was **the initiation ceremony for one entering the Old Covenant and to keep its law!** It was **after** that ritual was accomplished that the person had the right to observe the law!

Therefore, the question of whether the Christians must keep the Sabbath and the rest of the law of Moses, surfaced as a problem in the Church of the first century, and those saints to whom the faith was delivered **once for all time** (Jude 3), took care of it under the direction of the Holy Spirit and **decreed that Christians did not have to keep it!** They made it clear that we receive salvation and the Holy Spirit by God’s grace because of our faith in Christ (Ephesians 2:8,9)!

Thus, the matter is very simple: **Those who try to complicate and change the decree which was given on this matter by the Council of Jerusalem, as it is laid out in Acts 15, are ambassadors of a different gospel. Paul said that they and their gospel are cursed** (Galatians 1:8,9).

Those who wish to keep the Old Testament law are free to do so — **but first, they should be circumcised**. They cannot hide behind the idea of a “spiritual circumcision of the heart” only, because the Old Testament Law they wish to keep, is a law of the letter --- not of the spirit. The Old Testament Law does not allow for a “spiritual circumcision of the heart” only. **It first demands a physical circumcision;** and if any Christians decide to be circumcised, Galatians 5:2-4 will apply to them. There it says:

“...every man who receives circumcision...is bound to keep the whole law. You are severed from Christ...you have fallen from grace.” (Author’s emphasis)

Other points to consider

1. The apostle Paul, who was one of the great defenders of Christian freedom, compared the Old and New Covenants to the two women of Abraham. He said that the Old Covenant, which was made between God and the children of Israel at Sinai, produces slaves, while the New Covenant produces **children of freedom**. Let’s read his words in Galatians 4:21-26:

“Tell me, you who desire to be under law, do you not hear the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave and one by a free woman. But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, the son of the free

woman through promise. Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother.”

Thus, those who enslave themselves under the Sinaitic Covenant have separated themselves from Christ, because He brought deliverance to the captives and His New Covenant in His blood produces **children of freedom**.

2. In Galatians 3:23-25, Paul compares the law of the Old Covenant to a “custodian”. He said,

“Now before faith came, we were confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed. So that the law was our custodian until Christ came, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a custodian;”

From the above it is clear that those Hebrews who became Christians **were no longer under the Old Testament Law**.

3. In Galatians 4:10,11, Paul wrote,

“You observe days, and months, and seasons, and years! I am afraid I have laboured over you in vain.”

What does the expression “*days, and months, and seasons, and years*” refer to? It refers to the appointed days or celebrations which **the circumcised covenant people** had to

keep forever according to the Law. **The seventh-day Sabbath** was only one of them (Leviticus 23:3). Others were:

- a) **The Passover** (Leviticus 23:5; Exodus 12:14).
- b) **The Feast of Unleavened Bread** (Exodus 12:17).
- c) **First Fruits** (Leviticus 23:10-14).
- d) **Pentecost** (Leviticus 23:15-21).
- e) **Blowing of the Trumpets** (Leviticus 23:23-23).
- f) **Day of Atonement** (Leviticus 16:29,31).
- g) **Feasts of Booths** (Leviticus 23:33-44).
- h) **New Moons** (2 Chronicles 2:4).
- i) **Sabbatical Years** (Leviticus 25:2-7).
- j) **Jubilee** (Leviticus 25:8-12, 20, 21).

Thus, Paul's "*days*" refer to the seventh-day Sabbaths; "*months*" to the New Moons; "*seasons*" to the seasonal celebrations such as Passover, Feast of the Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Pentecost, etc; and "*years*" to Sabbatical years and Jubilee.

Other scriptures which use the same **ascending** order of "*days*", "*months*", "*seasons*", referring to the seventh-day Sabbaths, to the New Moons, and to fixed festivals, are: 1 Chronicles 23:31; 2 Chronicles 2:4; 8:12,13; 31:3; Ezekiel 45:17. Other verses may refer to the same celebrations in a

descending order, that is, “*fixed festivals*”, “*New Moons*”, and “*Sabbaths*”, as it appears in Colossians 2:16. There, Paul said, “*Therefore, let no one pass judgment on you...with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath*”.

Therefore, in this verse, the word “*Sabbath*” does not refer to the seasonal or yearly celebrations, neither does it refer to Sabbatical years, as some people preach, but it refers to the seventh day of each week.

4. Those who believe that today’s Christians must keep the Old Testament Law, use Revelation 12:17 and 14:12 as a basis for their doctrine. There, it speaks about those who “*keep the commandments of God and bear testimony to Jesus*”.

“See?” they say, “Here it speaks about those who keep the Ten Commandments.”

The above reasoning does not stand. In the foregoing verses, the words “**Ten Commandments**” do not appear. Then, which commandments of God do those who have the testimony or the faith of Christ keep?

The fact that they bear testimony to Christ proves that they are believers in Christ. **As believers in Christ, they are partakers of the New Covenant which Jesus established in His blood** (Luke 22:20; Jeremiah 31:31). As children of “the Jerusalem above”, they are free; they are not slaves under the regulations and the laws of the Sinaitic Covenant (Galatians 4:21-26). They worship the Father in Spirit and

Truth --- **not according to the regulations for worship of the first covenant.**

In Hebrews chapters eight and nine, the writer of the letter pointed out that **the first covenant was not faultless** (chapter 8:7). In verse 13 he says:

“In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first (the Old Covenant) as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”

Whose words did the writer of the above verse recall? Who was the first Person who talked about a **“new covenant”**? According to Matthew 26:28, the One who spoke about the new covenant was the Lord Jesus Christ. By naming His covenant **“new”**, He automatically made the first covenant of Sinai **“old”**. **On the day of His death, His Covenant came into effect, (because every covenant comes into effect after the person who made it dies), and at the same time, the old covenant died.** Indeed, the apostle Paul said that Jesus took the old covenant out of the way by symbolically **nailing it to the cross** (Colossians 2:13,14).

Therefore, looking at the first covenant **as a thing of the past**, the Christian writer of the letter to the Hebrews went on to explain which things were included in that first covenant that were now obsolete. When we read his account, we notice that the verbs are **in the past tense**. He wrote:

“Now even this first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. For a tent was prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of Presence; it is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain stood a tent called the Holy of Holies,

having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, which contained a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant;" (Hebrews 9:1-4).

From these words we see that **the tables of the covenant, the Ten Commandments, were part of, in fact, the basis for the worship regulations of the Old Covenant, which, as far as Christians are concerned, was a thing of the past.** However, the important question remains:

Which commandments of God must Christians keep? Are there any in the New Testament? Yes, there are! One is written in Matthew 17:5. There, we read,

"While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him."

In 1 John 3:23 the apostle John presents **two more** commandments which God gave to Christians:

- a) **Believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ.**
- b) **Love one another.**

From the foregoing, we observe that God's commandments to the followers of Jesus are only **three**, and the two of them command us to believe and to obey His Son! Thus, **since we must hear or obey His Son, we must keep the commandments of His Son!** For this reason, in John 14:15, we hear Jesus saying, ***"If ye love me, keep my commandments"*** and in John 15:10, we hear Him saying, ***"If***

you keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love."

The Lord Jesus was the only One who kept all His Father's commandments without failing. Now He expects His followers to keep **His commandments**. His commandments are not many, neither are they burdensome. These are:

- a) **Love one another** (John 13:34).
- b) **Preach** (Mark 16:15).
- c) **Teach** (Matthew 28:19).
- d) **Baptize** (Matthew 28:19).
- e) **"... this do in remembrance of me."** (Luke 22:19).

5. Christians who wish to subject themselves to the Old Testament Law should seriously consider the following point:

The covenant people who kept the seventh-day Sabbath **did not enter God's rest because of unbelief** (Hebrews 3:19). On the other hand, the followers of Christ **enter God's rest because of their faith in Jesus** (Hebrews 4:3).

The writer of the letter to the Hebrews declares that **the one who** enters God's rest, *"he also hath rested from his own works, as God did from his"* (Hebrew 4:10). And immediately after these words, as Christians don't have to do the works of the Mosaic Law in order to receive salvation (be-

cause they receive it through faith in Christ), he encourages the Christian Hebrews to be diligent to enter God's rest (i.e., to stop keeping the Law of the Old Testament) so that they will not be **guilty of disobedience** (verse 11; from the Greek text).

Dear Reader, if you wish to keep one day holier than the rest for the Lord, (whether it is Saturday or Sunday), you are free to do so (Romans 14:4-6). However, do not turn **your decision** into law. Do not try to enslave, under **your law**, those **from the nations** who received God's saving grace because they believed in Christ, neither should you try to enslave **again** under the Law of Moses those **of the circumcision** whom Christ has set free (Galatians 4:4,5; 5:1). Praise His Name!

For a more comprehensive study on the above subject, see the book, "Sabbath in Crisis" by Dale Ratzlaff. Life Assurance Ministries, 19109 North 71st Drive, Glendale, AZ, 85308, USA

Appendix C

Should Christians Tithe?

The born-again Christians know that they are not under obligation to keep the Old Testament law which became **obsolete** with the establishment of the **New Covenant** (Hebrews 8:7,8,13). They know that they cannot be justified before God through the works of the Law which God had given to His **circumcised** people, Israel (Colossians 2:13,14; Acts chapter 15). However, the leaders of some Christian groups, ignoring the words of Paul in Galatians 3:10-13, pressure their followers to keep **parts** of the Mosaic law, such as the law of **tithing**, the keeping of the Sabbath or the acceptance of a special priesthood. In the fore-mentioned verses, Paul wrote:

“Because as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: because it is written, ‘Cursed is every one who does not continue (persist) IN ALL the things which are written in the book of the law, in order to do them.’ The fact that no one is justified by the law before God, is manifest; because ‘The righteous will live by faith.’ And the law is not of faith; but, ‘The man who does them (the works of the Mosaic law), will live through them.’ Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law ...” (Galatians 3:10-13)

From the above verses, we understand that before the death

and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, one could receive everlasting life **by keeping ALL the works prescribed by the Law of Moses!** In other words, the person who would be able to keep the Law of Moses to perfection would live by the works of that law (Matthew 19:16,17). However, **an uncircumcised person did not have the right to keep any part of the Mosaic law --- not even the smallest of the ordinances** (Exodus 12:43,44,48). Why? Because circumcision was the “initiation ceremony”, so to speak, which gave to the circumcised person the right to enter the first covenant and to keep its law (Acts 15:5);! On the other hand, **a person who would keep only PART of the Law, would be cursed by God!** (Galatians 3:10-13)

Since the time **our Savior God became flesh** (John 1:1,14) and **died** on the cross for the transgressions of men according to the Scriptures (Isaiah 53:5,8), God will give everlasting life to all those who will:

1. **Recognize who Jesus Is** (Isaiah 53:11; John 6:40; 8:24), in other words, to all those who will believe and confess with their mouths that Jesus is the “**LORD**”, the YHWH of Romans 10:9,13,14,
2. **Believe in their hearts that God raised Him bodily from the dead** (Romans 10:9; Acts 2:31), and
3. **Pray to Jesus --- call on His Name** (Romans 10:9-14). If they cannot pray to Him (because prayer is worship), then, they have not believed that He really is the “**LORD**”, i.e., the YHWH of Romans 10:9,13!

The words of the apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:8,9, are clear: Salvation is received **by grace through faith** (in the right object of faith) --- not by keeping the law of Moses!

One of the requirements of the Mosaic law was that **all those who were under the first covenant had to give one tenth of their income to help the poor and to support a special priesthood**, the Levites and their families, because God had forbidden them to inherit any part of the promised land (Numbers 18:20,21).

Those who have entered Christ's new covenant do not need a special priesthood. The Christian Church of the first century did not have a special priesthood. The Lord Jesus is not a High Priest according to the order of Aaron but according to the order of Melchizedek --- outside the Levitical priesthood appointed by God (Hebrews 7:11). The Lord Jesus Christ did not establish a special priesthood in His Church, neither did His apostles after Him (Matthew 23:8-12). They did not establish a special priesthood for the following reason: All those who by faith enter the new covenant, which the Lord Jesus established with His blood, **become priests** (Revelation 1:6). Those believers make up **a kingdom of priests** (1 Peter 2:5,9) whose High Priest is the Lord Jesus Christ (Hebrews 7:22-26). Therefore, the doctrine which exacts from a Christian to tithe as a fulfillment of the Mosaic law, is alien to the New Testament and places the Christian under the curse of that law!

The apostles did not introduce the law of tithing in the Christian Church; neither did they use that law as a guideline for the minimum amount that a Christian must give. They advised the believers in Christ to remem-

ber the poor (Galatians 2:10) and to give as the Lord had prospered them (1 Corinthians 16:2).

Those who introduce **the law** of tithing in the Christian Church are guilty of heresy. In their love for money, they use Malachi 3:8-10 which was written for **the circumcised Israelites**. They preach that the Christians who do not give one tenth of all their income to their religious institution every month, rob God and that, for this reason, God will curse them! By doing so, **they alter the gospel of grace** and thus, they bring the curse of God upon themselves (Galatians 3:10-12).

Malachi 3:8-10 does not apply to Christians! Therefore, let it be known to all that the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ does not contain any curses for those who believe in Him, but it curses all those who alter it (Galatians 1:8,9)! Remember the words of Paul. He said, “... *there isn't any condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus*” (Romans 8:1)!

Those who claim to be Christians and are involved with the law of tithing, must remember that a Christian who tries to fulfill the Mosaic law **or any part of it, has not entered God's rest and is guilty of disobedience** (Hebrews 4:11).

I have discussed the subject of tithing with many Christians. It is perplexing that when I say that those who keep **part** of the Mosaic Law are under the curse of that Law, some of them, immediately, **change their story!** They say that the Christians must tithe not as a fulfillment of the Mosaic Law, but to follow **the example of Abraham** who tithed to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:18-20)! They try to say that because Abraham gave one tenth of the loot to Mel-

chizedek **before** the law was given to the Israelites, the giving of the one tenth (tithing) must continue even **after** Christ fulfilled the law of Moses with His eternal sacrifice!

I wonder, if it is only for the sake of following Abraham's example and not fulfilling the law of Moses, then, why do they use Malachi 3:8-10 which instilled fear in the Israelites so they would fulfill the Mosaic Law?

Let us consider the following:

Did Abraham give a tithe to Melchizedek **monthly**? The answer is "**No!**" Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek **only once!**

Did Abraham give Melchizedek one tenth of all his yearly income? The answer is, "**No!** He gave only one tenth of the spoils he collected after a battle!" (Hebrews 7:4)

Then, how could Abraham's case become our example? Why is this case used to convince the Christians that they must give one tenth of all their income, every month, to the religious institution they belong to?

How is it that Jesus and the apostles did not use Abraham's example to teach the Christians of their era that they must tithe?

Do the Scriptures say that **Melchizedek symbolizes the religious institutions of our time**? If not, then, why should Christians tithe to them?

The Scriptures indicate clearly that Melchizedek symbolizes the Son of God and His eternal priesthood because he

was “*without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life*” (Hebrews 7:3).

If we think of the case of Melchizedek in a symbolic way, as Jesus is High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:11), **then, our priesthood as priests of God and of Christ (Revelation 20:6) is also according to the order of Melchizedek!** Thus, what should we say? Melchizedek must pay tithes to Melchizedek? This case has become ridiculous!

If Christians must tithe because Abraham tithed **before** the law, then, what should we say about circumcision? Abraham was also circumcised **before** the law! Is it possible we must follow Abraham’s example and circumcise? God forbid! (Galatians 2:2-4)

Obviously, the doctrine of tithing is not in harmony with the gospel of the New Covenant, **the gospel of grace**, of which we are sharers!

The monetary needs of the Pastors and of the local churches whose goal should be **to help the poor**, should be covered by free-willed offerings of the flock of God (1 Corinthians 9:11-14; 16:2; Galatians 2:10) --- not by keeping part of the Mosaic Law!

The decision of how each one of the readers of this article will react is as personal as is the reward which each one will receive from the Lord when He comes (Revelation 22:12)!

Appendix D

The “Special Priesthood” and the so-called “Apostolic Succession”

The above title alone would have been sufficient reason to upset the apostles and the rest of the early Church* of our Lord Jesus Christ; in fact, they would have attacked the very root of this concept, and they would have pronounced it as anathema (accursed).

In his book, “Royal Priesthood” Mr. S. Charalabakis wrote, “to the true Church of Christ the Special Priesthood is a foreign and strange element.”

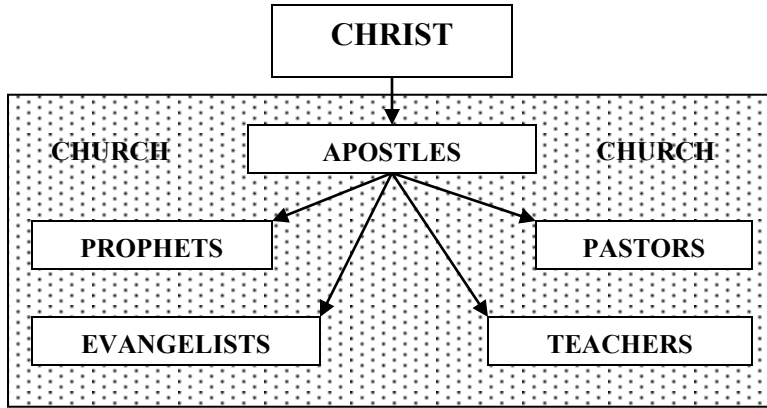
Those who have studied the New Testament and other writings of early Christian writers have observed that those who served the Church were called “**Elders**” (Πρεσβύτεροι --- presvyteree), “**Overseers**” (Επίσκοποι --- episkopee), and “**Deacons**” (Διάκονοι --- diakonee’). Let’s have a closer look at those three titles:

* My studies have led me to believe that the true Church, the Body of Christ, is not a religious institution but the born-again, those men and women who believe that Jesus Christ is “**God over all and blessed forever**” (Romans 9:5; from the Greek text), and who are indwelled by His Spirit (Romans 8:9).

- a) “**Πρεσβύτερος**” (presbyteros) is a person who is advanced in life, **an elder**, a senior.
- b) “**Επίσκοπος**” (episkopos) is a person who is knowledgeable enough to oversee a work done by others; **an overseer**.
- c) “**Διάκονος**” (diakonos) is a person who serves others; **a domestic servant**; a person who waits upon others.

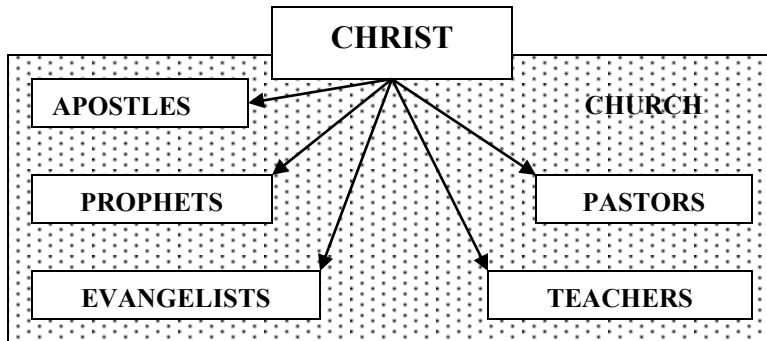
In the early Christian Church, the titles **elder** and **overseer** referred to the same position of service; in other words, an elder was an overseer and an overseer was an elder (Acts 20:17 -- **elders**; Philippians 1:1 -- **overseers**; 1 Timothy 3:1-- **overseers**; Titus 1:5 -- **elders**; Titus 1:7 -- **overseers**; Acts 15:2,4,6,22,23 -- **elders**).

The laying on of hands to appoint an elder or a deacon to a position of Church service is Scriptural. However, there is not one verse to indicate that the apostles ever laid their hands upon the heads of elders and deacons in order to transfer to them the right to exercise authority as lords over the rest of the believers in Christ. The apostles could not have done such a thing because they never had that kind of authority themselves (Matthew 20:25,26). The doctrine which declares that **the apostles were the only ones who received their “great authority” from Christ, and in turn, they distributed “smaller authorities” to others in the Church, that is, to the prophets, to the evangelists, to the teachers, and to the pastors, is not based on the Scriptures.** The foregoing **false doctrine** can be represented by the following diagram:



Now, let us compare the above diagram with the words of the apostle Paul from Ephesians 4:10-12. Speaking about Christ, he said, *“He that came down is the same who also went up above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. And He gave some to be apostles; some, prophets; some, evangelists; some, pastors and teachers; with a view to the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ;”*

According to these verses, we are compelled to change the previous diagram and present it as follows:



From the above diagram, we observe that the apostles were **one of the “gifts”** which Christ placed in the Church along with the other members of the body, for the building up of the entire body --- **not to exercise authority over it!**

Another thing we observe from the above representation of Ephesians 4:10-12, is **the absence of “Special Priests”**. In fact, **the New Testament does not mention anywhere that the apostles and the rest of the Church ever appointed believers to make up a “Special Priesthood”**. It was well understood by all that **all the believers in Christ are made priests, composing a royal priesthood, a holy priesthood, a kingdom of priests** who worship God in spirit and truth (1 Peter 2:5,9; Hebrews 4:16; 13:15,16; Revelation 1:6; John 4:24). Thus, **the presence of a “Special Priesthood” among a people who make up a kingdom of priests is not only unscriptural; it is also ridiculous, out of place and useless!** If the King of kings were to return today, He would ask again, *“Friend, how did you come in here?”* (Matthew 22:12).

OTHER POINTS TO CONSIDER

1. The “Special Priests” say that Jesus gave the power to “bind and to loose” to the apostles only and explain that the power to “bind and to loose” refers to **the authority to forgive or to refuse forgiveness of sins**. Therefore, in order to justify the existence of a “special priesthood” within the Christian community, it is claimed that today the “special priesthood” has the power to “bind and to loose” and that they received that authority through the so-called **“apostolic succession”**.

The above application of “binding and loosing” is not Scriptural. The expression “bind and loose” has nothing to

do with the forgiveness of sins. **Only God can forgive sins.** “Bind and loose” is a Hebrew expression; it refers to one’s authority to “**permit or to reject**”. It means that God gave to all the believers in Christ the privilege to permit or to reject a person from continuing to be part of a local assembly. It was part of local Church discipline for the purpose of helping a sinner to realize his sinful ways. **This privilege was not given only to the apostles** (Matthew 18:15-20; 16:19; 1 Corinthians 5:1-6; 1 Timothy 1:18-20).

The apostles never used the authority to “bind and to loose” for forgiving sins. A prime example is the case of Simon the magician. When Simon asked the apostle Peter to give him the gift of imparting the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands in exchange for money, Peter rejected his proposition. At the same time, **Peter did not invite the Magician to come to him for forgiveness, neither did he send Simon to another believer to confess in order to receive forgiveness for his sins, but he sent him directly to God.** Peter told Simon that he “*might*” be forgiven because he doubted the Magician’s true repentance (Acts 8:18-24).

The only verse the “Special Priests” use to support their claim that they have the authority to forgive sins, is John 20:23. There, we read, “*If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.*”

The “Special Priests” have deliberately abused and misapplied the above words. If one **does not examine** the context and the rest of the Scriptures which refer to the same case, one could easily be misled. For this reason, it would be beneficial for us to examine this issue carefully, comparing

it with the words of Luke 24:36-49, to answer some important questions:

Q. Who spoke the words of John 20:23?

A. Jesus did (John 20:19; Luke 24:36).

Q. When?

A. After His resurrection.

Q. To whom did He say these words?

A. To His disciples (John 20:20).

Q. When it says “*His disciples*”, does it refer exclusively to His twelve apostles?

A. No! Jesus had many disciples (Luke 10:1). Moreover, Judas the Iscariot was not present because he had committed suicide prior to that day (Matthew 27:5), Matthias had not yet replaced him (Acts 1:26), and Thomas was absent (John 2:24). What can we say? Did Jesus give the “authority” to forgive sins only to the ten?

Q. If, indeed, He gave them the authority to forgive sins, does this mean that an apostle or a disciple of the Lord had the authority to say to an unbeliever, “**I forgive your sins**”? Or did he perhaps have the authority to say to a believer who had repented, “**I do not forgive your iniquity!**”?

A. No, of course not! The message of the gospel is clear: The sins of the world are washed away by the blood of

Christ, **ONLY IF** the sinners will recognize Him as the “**Lord**” (YHWH) whose Name one must “call upon” (to pray to) **in order to be saved and IF they will believe in their heart that God raised Him bodily (Acts 2:31) from the dead (Romans 10:9,13).** Those who will not fulfill with faith the above requirements for salvation which God has placed, will not be saved; **their sins will not be forgiven.** Jesus said it clearly: Those who will not believe that He Is the One He said that He Is, **will die in their sins** regardless of the number of prayers on their behalf from those who claim that have the authority to forgive sins!

The good news that one’s sins are washed away **the very moment one believes in the True Jesus of the Bible, who is the “Most Holy One” of Daniel 9:24 who was to become anointed, in other words, to become the Christ,** was to be preached to the world by all the disciples of Jesus. For this reason Jesus said to them, *“Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, ...”* (Luke 24:46,47). Therefore, His disciples have the “authority” to say to a person who just believed in the True Christ of the Bible, **“Your sins are forgiven in the name of Jesus”**, and, on the other hand, to a person who refuses to believe in Him, **“Your sins remain”**. **The only man who has the authority to forgive sins is the God-man Jesus Christ** (John 1:1,14; Mark 2:5-12). The claim of the “Special Priests” that they have the authority to forgive or to retain one’s sins is contrary to the true gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ!

2. Another point I wish to mention is the fact that **the apostles never used their privilege to “bind and to loose” in**

order to exercise authority over the rest of the Church of Christ; neither did they ever call themselves, or any other believer, “**bishop**” (Δεσπότης --- ‘despotis’ in Greek), which means: “**Master**”, “**Lord**”, **a person who owns slaves and rules over them with an absolute and uncontrolled power**. With all respects and humility, the apostles reserved this title for God and Christ alone, and called themselves “**slaves**” or “**servants**” of God and of Christ (1 Timothy 6:1,2; 2 Timothy 2:21; Titus 2:9; 1 Peter 2:18; Job 5:8; 2 Peter 2:1; Jude 4; Romans 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1:1). The only authority Jesus gave to those who believe in Him is to cast out demons, to heal the sick, and to have authority over all the power of the enemy --- **not over His Church** (Matthew 10:1; Luke 10:19).

3. From the Old Testament we learn that God had selected and appointed the Levites to form a special priesthood. A **kind of “succession”** existed in that special priesthood as the priesthood’s responsibilities were passed from the fathers to the sons. But, from the New Testament we learn that Jesus became a priest according to the order of Melchizedek --- **outside the special Aaronic priesthood** (Hebrews 6:20). According to the New Testament, **“succession” in the Christian Church is non-existent** because whosoever believes in the True Jesus of the Bible, who is **God the Word who became flesh** (John 1:1,14), **becomes, at once, a priest** (Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 1 Peter 1:5,9).

4. In Hebrews 7:24,25, we read:

*“but He (Jesus) has the priesthood not to be passed on (Greek: “απαράβατον” [aparavaton] --- it means that His priesthood is **untransferable**, that it can not be passed on to successors) *because of His continuing forever. From**

this also He is able to save to perfection those who come to God through Him, ever living to intercede for them.”

Therefore, the very concept of having a system of “special priests” and “high priests” that claim “succession”, is an **insult to the eternal and “απαράβατον”/untransferable priesthood of Jesus!**

5. In Hebrews 10:11-14, we read: *“And indeed every priest stands day by day ministering, and often offering the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But He (Jesus), offering but one sacrifice for sins, sat down in perpetuity at the right hand of God ... For by one offering (His own sacrifice on the cross) He has perfected in perpetuity the ones being sanctified.”*

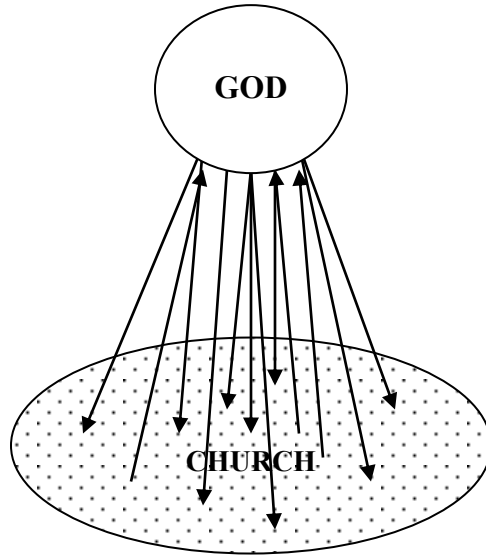
From the above, it is very clear that although the priests of Israel offered daily sacrifices, they were unable to forgive the sins of their people forever. Also, it is manifest that Jesus put them **“out of commission”**, so to speak, because by one offering (His own sacrifice) **He has perfected in perpetuity** (forever) **those who believe in Him**. Therefore, the presence of a “special priesthood” within the Christian Church, which attempts to perfect the believers through rituals and masses, **undermines, nullifies, and insults the eternal effectiveness of the one offering of Jesus.**

6. In John 14:23, we read the following words of Jesus:

“... if anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him. And we will come to him and we will dwell in him.”

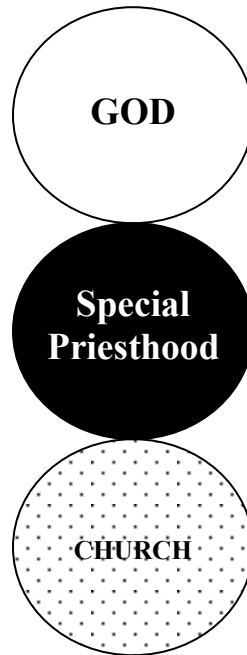
From the above words, and from 1 Corinthians 6:19, 2 Corinthians 6:16, and Romans 8:9-11, we learn that **those who believe in the True Christ of the Bible, are God's temple because God indwells them.**

Now, let us suppose that the following diagram represents the Church, that is, all the believers, and their interactive relationship with the Godhead that dwells in them:



If those who make up the Church will allow the existence of a “special priesthood” **in order to function on their behalf**, their precious personal interactive relationship with God **will cease to exist!** The only hope the believers will have to be in touch with God, will be, supposedly, through the “special priesthood” class, as is demonstrated by the following diagram. This diagram shows how the circle of

the “special priesthood” touches God, as they claim, from one side, and the believers in Christ, from the other side:



What a difference between the two diagrams! In the diagram of the previous page all the believers are touched by God. However, in the above diagram, **the “Special Priesthood” class comes between God and the Church!** Truly, their presence in the Christian community undermines the wonderful and mysterious work that the Lord Jesus Christ accomplished through His death and resurrection, that is, uniting God with all those who believe in Him!

The “special priesthood” class **hinders God’s purpose for the “New Creation”**. Their claim to be needed in order to “help” those who are part of God’s new creation **to become better Christians**, undermines and blasphemes the ability and the work of God (Ephesians 2:10).

Those who are part of God’s new creation know that the need of a “special priesthood” came to an end when ***“the veil of the temple was torn into two from top to bottom”*** the day Jesus was crucified (Matthew 27:51). Since that day, all the believers have free and direct access to the presence of God through the Holy Spirit, offering to God ***“sacrifices of lips”*** without the assistance of a “special priesthood” (Hebrews 4:16; 13:15; 10:10-14).

7. The New Testament reveals that all those who believe and follow the True Jesus of the Bible, who is the YHWH of Psalms 68:18 (compare with Ephesians 4:8-10) make up the **“Body”** of Christ and that Jesus is the **“Head”** (Romans 12:4,5; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:12-27; Ephesians 1:22; 5:23).

The “special priesthood” **decapitates and separates the “Body” from its “Head”**. Look at the illustration that follows:

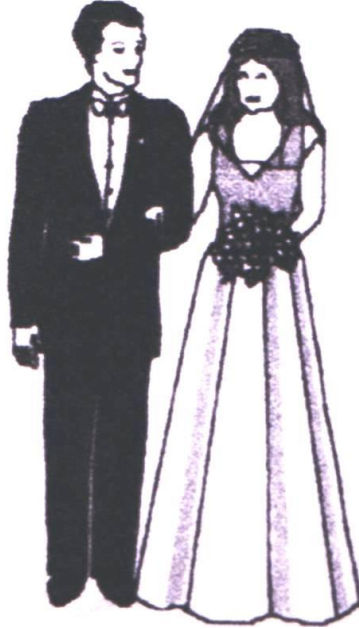
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SPECIAL PRIESTHOOD



8. The New Testament clearly states that Jesus is the “**Bridegroom**” and that all those who believe in Him are His “**Bride**” (2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7). **The “special priesthood” drives a wedge between Christ and His “Bride”. No bride needs “other men” in order to “help” her “improve” her personal relationship with her husband.** Meditate on the illustration on the next page:



9. Those who believe in the True Jesus of the Bible are saved and sanctified **priests**. This reality should never be forgotten by any of His true followers (1 Peter 2:4,5,9). As a “**Holy**” people, as a “**Kingdom of priests**” they have the right, the authority to **preach**, to **teach**, to **baptize**, to **distribute the bread and the wine**, and to do everything that is part of the worship they offer to God and to Christ (Revelation 20:6). **They should not hire “special priests” to carry out the priestly responsibilities on their behalf!**

10. The “special priests” are guilty of a rebellion like Korah’s (Core’s) who wanted to take upon himself a priesthood apart from God’s arrangement, a priesthood which God had not given him (Numbers chapter 16; Jude 12).

God's arrangement today for Christians is that every believer is a priest. As priests, they live and work for the glory of God (1 Peter 2:5; 1 Corinthians 10:31). **They do not become priests because of their own worth;** it is the grace of God that places them in this position of service based on what Christ has done. Therefore, the person who decides to separate himself and become a "special priest" apart from God's arrangement to act on behalf of his brothers with acts of forgiveness and offerings, usurps the priestly service of Christ and of His followers and becomes guilty of a rebellion similar to Korah's.

For those who speak Greek and wish a comprehensive study on the above subject, read the book, "**ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΟΝ ΙΕΡΑΤΕΥΜΑ**" by Στυλ. Χαραλαμπίκη, Σολομού 4, Διόνυσος, Αττική, 14565.

Appendix E

Other Dreams, Visions, and Spiritual Experiences

After Jesus, my Great Deliverer, freed me from the religious captivity of the Watchtower Society, He continued to guide me with His Spirit in order to protect me from falling again into Satan's trap and at the same time to show me that there is nothing more precious in one's life than having a personal relationship with Him. Here are a few experiences:

1. One day, when my children were still young, I met a young man who invited me to visit his religious group, and I accepted. After the meeting, I was approached by the pastor. He was very friendly. He greeted me and asked:

“Did you come here because you are looking for the truth?”

“No!” I answered with a smile, “I am not looking for the truth because Jesus, who is the only Truth, dwells in me.”

The pastor smiled. He showed that he was rather pleased with my answer. Then, gesturing towards the hallway, he said:

“Allow me to give you a tour. As you are visiting here for

the first time, I would like to show you the rest of the building.”

I accepted the invitation. During the tour, he stopped and invited me to bring my children to his church, so they might make friends with the children of other churchgoers. I thought it was a good idea. I told him that I might see him again soon.

When I went home, I prayed to God and said:

“Dear Father, I would not like to offend you in any way by going to this religious group. I know you have made me free, and I do appreciate the freedom you have given me. Tonight, I need to hear from you. I have decided to take my children to this group so they can make new friends. Is this all right with you? Is it proper for me to do so? Please guide me.”

That same night the Lord answered me with two dreams:

a) The dream about the black and white Dog

“I was driving on a narrow and straight road. My wife was sitting on the passenger side, and our children were sitting on the back seat.

On the left side of the road there was a ditch. At the bottom of the ditch there was a lot of mud. I looked into the ditch and I saw the dead body of a Dalmatian dog. It had black and white spots.

I continued to drive. Suddenly, behind my seat by the feet of my children, I saw another Dalmatian dog. It was so friendly and alive! Momentarily, I stopped the car because I

wanted to pat the dog on its head. As soon as I extended to pat it, I remembered that only a few moments earlier, I had seen this dog lying dead in the mud of the ditch. The hair on the back of my neck stood up. ‘What is that dog doing in my car?’ I thought. ‘A few moments ago, I saw it dead out there. How can it be alive in my car?’

Terrified, I opened the door of the car to get rid of it. The dog seemed to understand my intentions. It became angry. It showed me its teeth and was ready to bite me.”

Filled with fear, I woke up. Almost immediately, I fell asleep again and I had the following dream:

The dream about the white boat

“I stood on the seashore. Nearby, on the sea, I saw a beautiful white boat. The outside of the boat was glittering in the sun.

Sitting in the boat was the boat owner. He looked up as I walked towards his boat. As soon as he noticed me, he invited me to come aboard.

‘Oh ... No!’ I replied. ‘I am not getting into your boat.’

‘Why not?’ he asked.

‘Because it is rotten!’ I replied.

He laughed.

‘This is a new boat; and it is freshly painted; and you call it rotten?’ he asked.

‘Yes!’ I replied. ‘From the outside, it might look new, clean, beautiful, and strong; but if I come close enough, I will be able to show you at least one rotten spot.’

I walked to the edge of the shore, and I looked down into the boat. I noticed that it did not have an engine or sails, nor did it have a steering wheel. Where the steering wheel was supposed to be, I saw a rotten spot.

‘You, see?’ I asked, ‘Your boat is rotten. The fact that it looks white and clean on the outside is very deceiving.’”

After I pronounced these words, the dream continued with one more detail which I do not wish to mention. However, immediately after that, I woke up as a voice spoke to my spirit, saying:

“Twice, I answered you tonight about the case you asked Me. First, let us consider the vision about the dog. The fact that you were driving your car, means that you have been leading your family on the straight and narrow road. Jesus is the Road; He said, ‘I am the Way.’

The dog you saw is a picture of a religious group. As the dog had black and white spots, so the religious groups are made from good and bad people.

Since the time I delivered you from the organization of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, ‘religion’ for you is dead, just like the dead body of the dog you saw in the ditch. Why are you trying to get involved again with another religious group which, like the organization of the Witnesses, is made up of good and bad people? ‘Religion’ is ‘Religion’; that is why the second dog I showed you was identical to the first. Why

would you want to put yourself in a position to be hurt again as you were hurt by the Witnesses? Even the second dog can bite.

As far as the boat in the sea is concerned, it pictures a church in the sea of mankind. The boat owner, the pastor, invited you to enter his boat. But I have taught you that no religion is perfect. They all have at least one rotten spot, and I have given you the insight to recognize it. Why do you want to be involved with a religious group again? Are you not happy that I have made you free?"

When I heard those words, I praised the Name of the Lord, and I thanked Him for the guidance. His words "No religion is perfect" made me realize that none of the religious organizations is the Truth. I thanked Him for placing me on the straight and narrow Road, which is **the Truth and the Life**. It was He who killed the dog of the Watchtower for me and took it out of the way. In fact, He threw its lifeless carcass into the mud of the ditch where it belonged. Had the Lord not done this for me, the dog of the Watchtower might have stood in front of me, barking at me, delaying me, and even preventing me from walking on the Path called Jesus, which leads to God, to Life, and to Freedom.

The vision about the small, white sailboat

Another day, I was invited to speak before a religious group. When the service was about to begin, I had a colorful vision:

"Before me, I saw the sea. On the blue water I saw a small, beautiful white sailboat. Its sail was open and the little boat was travelling gracefully, powered by the gentle wind. Suddenly, a brick wall encircled the sailboat. The boat re-

mained afloat but could not travel any longer. It was as if it were floating in a well.”

Immediately, I asked the Lord to reveal to me the meaning of the vision. I asked Him to explain to me whether the sailboat pictured the church I was about to address. I asked whether that church had a bondage which I was supposed to bring to their attention and to ask them to overcome. The Lord spoke to me and surprised me with His answer. He said:

“You are the small white sailboat! As my vessel, I am sending you by my Spirit to groups and to individuals to say to them the things I want them to hear. Be alert! Do not become a member of this group! If you will, you will continue to be a vessel, but you will be bound by their rules and doctrines; therefore, you will not be able to go to places in order to say the things I want you to say.”

Within a few minutes after I had had the above vision, I was approached by the leader of that group. In a straightforward manner, he asked me to become a member. Politely, I declined. May the Name of the Lord be praised forever! Let His will be done in my life!

The vision of the fiery Dove

Shortly after the Lord had delivered me from my religious captivity, I had the following experience:

It was about one o'clock in the morning when I went to sleep. An hour later, I opened my eyes as if I had slept for eight hours. I was at total peace. Hovering over my bed, was a fiery Dove with its wings wide open. The Dove radiated a pure white light.

Instantly, a few words of an unknown language were imprinted in my mind, which I was able to pronounce. I was filled with deep love, joy, and peace. I thanked the Lord for giving me this beautiful experience.

My quest to find out what these unknown words meant caused me to go to the local library where I examined a dictionary. I found out that the words the fiery Dove had imprinted in my mind described Jesus: ‘The Son of the Eternal King.’ Praise His Name!

The Spirit of the Lord prayed for me

In Romans 8:26,27, the apostle Paul wrote:

“In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God’s will.”

From time to time, I suffered the pain of heavy stress. When stress overpowered me, it reduced me down to nothing. During these stress-attacks, I was unable to stand, neither could I breathe with ease.

The stress-attacks got progressively worse. One night, I experienced the worst attack ever. With great difficulty, I made it to bed. I did not have the strength to remove my winter jacket or my shoes. I fell on the bed face down. I breathed with great difficulty. I was reduced to the point that I could not even move my little finger. I felt that my life was about to expire.

My ability to breathe became weaker by the second. Eventually, I believed that my next tiny and faint breath would certainly be my last one. At that moment, at the centre of my being, in my spirit, I heard the voice of someone praying on my behalf. It was not my spirit praying. Neither could I understand His words. In my spirit I knew that the One who was praying on my behalf was the Spirit of God. From the tone of His voice, I realized that He was begging the Father to heal me and to give me life. I was ecstatic! As the Spirit of God continued to pray for me, my strength returned. I got up and glorified the Name of the Lord for allowing me to experience the truthfulness of Paul's words.

Experiencing a demonic attack

Another time, I had a powerful experience of a different kind. Although I had heard from others about migraine pains, I had never experienced them myself until that day. It felt as if my head were in a vice.

I went into the living room of my house and lay on the couch. I thought that if I went to sleep for a while, the pain might go away. When I woke up, the pain was worse than before.

I prayed to God for help. The Holy Spirit answered me and said: **"Stand on your faith!"** Immediately, I realized that I should rebuke the pain in the Name of Jesus. Thus, I said loudly, "Pain, I rebuke you in the Name of Jesus!" What happened next really surprised me. **Instantly, the pain became worse!** It felt as if something moved around my head, as if someone gave the 'vice' an extra turn. I thought I was going to die. I felt my eyes bulging out; but, because the pain reacted to my words, I realized that an intelligent being was responsible for it.

I wanted to explore the possibility. Thus, with great difficulty because of the pain, I rose and said loudly: “Demons, the Bible says that every knee shall bow, and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. Therefore, right now, I will bow down before Jesus, and I will confess that He is Lord. If you wish to stay on my head and continue to cause me pain, then, as my head will bow before Jesus, you must do the same, and you must confess that Jesus is Lord!”

Oh! ... The moment I went down on my knees, and I began to say the words **“Jesus is Lord!”** the very cause of my migraine **was lifted! Immediately! In a split of a second!** I became as healthy as I was before the incident, and **much stronger in my faith.** May the Name of Jesus be praised forever! How much I thank Him for giving such powerful training to His children!

The false god Maozim

The guidance the Lord gave me through dreams and visions, included revelations regarding people I was praying for. Amos was one of them. Amos was a dear person who, with his family, served the Watchtower Society for many years. When the Lord delivered me from the idolatry of the Watchtower, Amos, obeying the unscriptural policies of his religion, stopped talking to me. But I prayed to God to deliver him also. One night, the Lord gave me the following prophetic dream:

“I stood in front of a tall brick tower. At the top of the tower was the clay statue of a false god. A thick darkness had covered the earth. Looking at the windows, I noticed that the inside of the tower was even darker. There was light only on the Road where I stood.

Suddenly, Amos and his wife walked out from the dark tower and came towards me in the light. I talked to them about the dark building and the false god that decorated it. I told them that the day will come when the God of Heaven will cause this tower to collapse and its false god to be destroyed. I also told them to take heed and to stay away from this building so that it would not fall on them when it collapsed.

As soon as I said these things, we saw the building collapsing and the statue of the false god falling to the ground. Amos and his wife became terrified and began to run away. I tried to persuade them to remain in the light, but they ignored me; they ran away and disappeared in the pitch black darkness. Over the next few seconds, the clay statue of the false god hit the ground and shattered into pieces.”

I immediately woke up in agony repeating the name, ‘Maozim ... Maozim ... Maozim ...!’”

I was so sad! The Lord showed me the spiritual future of Amos and his wife. One day they would come in contact with me, they would come near the Light on which I was standing, they would see the false doctrines of the Watchtower collapsing, and they would run away from it; unfortunately, **instead of remaining in the Light, who enabled them to see the darkness of their organization and freed them from their captivity, they would run into a different kind of darkness! How sad!**

Understanding the dream

Let us understand the dream through questions and answers:

Q. What did the light symbolize?

A. Jesus and the light of life in me. He said, *“I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”* (John 8:12).

Q. What did the brick tower symbolize?

A. A man-made stronghold; a man-made organization which stands in the place of the Almighty Jesus appearing before its followers as a place of protection and salvation from the wrath of God and of the Lamb (Revelation 6:16). The tower which was built from **man-made bricks** has nothing to do with the true Church of the Lord Jesus which is being built from *“living stones”* (1 Peter 2:5).

Q. Who is the false god Maozim?

A. The god of forces, walls, buildings, fortresses, and strongholds. The name of this god is found in Daniel 11:38, in the Greek Septuagint.

Jehovah’s Witnesses, like many other religions, present their organization as a place of protection from the wrath of God. Therefore, they have created a stronghold which for logo has the picture of a tower! **No man-made stronghold has the power to save men from the wrath of God and of the Lamb** (Revelation 6:16). Those who have received Jesus in their hearts as their personal God and Savior do not need a stronghold to save them, because He has already saved them. Praise God! All manmade strongholds will collapse one day, and their false gods will be smashed like clay objects (Psalms 2:8,9).

Q. Why was there such great darkness inside the tower?

A. Because **God is light** (1 John 1:5). Those who do not believe that **the true light** of John 1:9, **God the Word who created all things for Himself, became flesh** (John 1:1, 2,14; Colossians 1:16), have not yet seen the Light and they dwell in darkness (John 8:12).

Those who do not follow the real Jesus but a created angel, as Jehovah's Witnesses believe Jesus is, do not have in them the light of life (John 8:12). They are still under the influence of the deceptive spirits who assist Satan in his attempts to keep men in darkness so that **the light of the good news of the glory of Jesus**, who is God above all and blessed forever, will not shine in them (2 Corinthians 4:4-6; Romans 9:5; Greek text).

It was not long after the Lord gave me the foregoing dream that I met Amos face to face. We talked about the false doctrines of the Watchtower. He saw the contradictions in their teachings. He realized that what they had proclaimed about 1914 was, indeed, a false prophecy (see Appendix A). Then he reasoned: "If the Lord did not return in 1914 A.D., He did not appoint the leaders of the Watchtower Society over all His belongings as they had taught us. **Then, why do they exercise authority over us?**"

At that moment, the walls of the stronghold called "Watchtower" began to collapse before him (2 Corinthians 10:4,5). The false god of the strongholds which had forced himself into the life of Amos fell to the ground and shattered into pieces. Truly, it was nothing more than a manmade, hollow clay statue! And I truly wonder: *How is it possible that a*

hollow and lifeless clay idol can cause fear in the minds of people in order to enslave them?

When Amos and his wife realized that they had been misled by the false god Maozim, they became very upset. For many years they believed that this stronghold was the modern-day ark which God had provided for their salvation. In their minds, God and their organization were going forward, hand in hand together. They trusted the organization as they trusted God (?). Now that they had lost their trust in their organization, they also lost their trust for the living God. How pitiful!

As I explained earlier, Amos and his wife approached the Light, for a short time, and the One who is the Light showed them that what they had served for many years was nothing more than a hollow and lifeless clay god. And they, instead of loving the One who is the Light, instead of staying near Him, **instead of devoting time to get to know Him better**, they ran away from Him; and being misled by deceiving spirits, they entered the total darkness of atheism. How sad!

From the above experience I realized that “**religion**” is a very powerful weapon for Satan. It is like Satan’s counterfeit double-edged sword. On the one hand it hinders and destroys the personal relationship with God of those who are captives in its hordes, and, on the other hand, it destroys the faith in God of those who run away from it because of their lack of knowledge of the word of God!

If you, Dear Reader, are like Amos, I beg you: Do not run away from the One who extended His grace upon you and enabled you to see the false god you served in the past.

Come to the True Jesus of the Bible who is **“God over all and blessed forever.”** (Romans 9:5; from the Greek text) He loved you to death! He gave His life for you. Have you ever had a friend who sacrificed his life for you? Don’t you think He deserves your love and attention? He is God! He created all things for Himself (Colossians 1:16). Are atheism or the gods of the New Age more powerful than the Almighty Jesus who holds all things with the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3)? Can the false gods fill you as He can (Ephesians 4:10)? Can they make you a real you, a real person, reflecting the True Light of God, or do they empty you and waste you by bringing you **into a state of nothingness** and **non-existence** enjoying the temporary works of the flesh which lead to death (Revelation 21:8)?

I pray that you will come to the True Jesus of the Bible where you will find the Real Truth (Jesus --- not the organization of a publishing house); also, you will find forgiveness, love, joy, peace, eternal life and **true freedom**. I hope that God will help you become strong enough to make this decision right now. Study Romans 10:1-15 carefully and ask God to help you understand from these verses who Jesus Christ really is. If you wish to have more information on this subject, read my book, **“Jesus --- God by Nature”**.

The dream about Amos’ empty house

Although Amos and his wife ran away from their Creator, I continued to pray for them. I believed that, for as long as they breathed, there was hope. From time to time, I would visit them and talk about God. Sometimes, Amos’ response would be, “Who is this Mr. God you are talking about? As long as I have money in my pocket, I am God!” and he would boast for having the courage to deliver a smart remark like that. He ignored the fact that the Bible calls those

who talk in this manner fools, corrupt, wicked and perverted (Psalms 14:1-3; 5:4). On the other hand, from time to time, he would show a lot of interest in the things of the Truth.

I asked the Lord to reveal to me the root of Amos' problem, so I could focus my discussions with him accordingly; and the Lord gave me the following dream:

“Amos and I were inside his empty house. A strong odor of death filled the room. Neither of us could bear it. Our lungs refused to breathe. In this agony, I told Amos to follow me out to the yard so that we could breathe some fresh air.

I ran out into the yard; he did not follow me.

The sky was covered with heavy, dark clouds, which were so low that they seemed to be touching the ground. The rain came down in torrents. Despite the rain, the air outside was no better than the air inside. I could not breathe; I thought I was going to die from asphyxiation.

I looked around trying to locate the source of the odor. A short distance away, I saw a hill. At the top of the hill, I saw the source. I saw, lying on the ground, the dead body of Jesus of Nazareth. The dark brown corpse looked as dry as a mummy. The wreath of thorns was still intact on His head. The presence of the dead body on the ground gave the impression that after they killed Him, they did not bury Him, but instead, discarded the body on the ground as an everlasting proof to the whole world that He never rose from the dead.

As the torrential rain hit the mummified body of Jesus, the disgusting odor of death filled the air. It wasn't possible that any living creature could survive. They would all die from the dreadful, suffocating stench.

I began to weep profusely. Suddenly, a friend appeared next to me.

'Costa,' he asked, 'why are you crying?'

'Friend,' I replied, 'I am crying because all the living creatures on the planet will die! Life will totally disappear from our earth. The odor of death which comes from the corpse of Jesus will kill us all. There is no hope of salvation!'

'Costa!!!' he said, 'Jesus did not remain dead! His body did not remain unburied! Jesus rose from the dead! Look at the hill again; the body is not there!'

I stopped crying and looked towards the hill. Oh! ... What joy! What wonderful joy! The corpse of Jesus was no longer there! The clouds were not there, neither was the rain, nor the odor of death. Now, the sky was clear. A sweet smell of life and freshness filled the atmosphere. My lungs filled with pure, fresh air."

I thanked the Lord for answering my prayer. With this dream He showed me exactly what Amos' problem was. Amos lived his life as one who believes that Jesus died and remained dead --- **as if** He had not been resurrected. Therefore, he had never responded to the words of Jesus who says,

“I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hears my voice, and opens the door, I will come into him, and will sup with him and he with me.” (Revelation 3:20).

When a person responds to Jesus and opens the door of his “house”, Jesus comes in and fills him because He is the One who fills all things (Ephesians 4:10). **Amos never realized that without Jesus the odor of death is in all humans** and that with Jesus in us we are a sweet smell of life (2 Corinthians 2:16).

In Hebrews 2:14,15, we read about Jesus the following:

“... that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

If Jesus were not raised from the dead, death would have continued to rule, and men out of the fear of eternal death would have remained captives in bondage forever, without any hope of life; but, praise God, now the resurrected Jesus is the One who holds the keys of Hades and death (Revelation 1:18). Those who believe in Jesus do not fear death any longer because they know that the Gates of Hades cannot prevail against His Church (Matthew 16:18). **What a glorious deliverance that Jesus brought to the captives!**

Dear Reader, the odor of death is built into all humans from the day they are born. No human can escape death without Jesus. If you have not yet accepted Jesus as your personal God and Savior, please do so now. Do not let another moment pass by. Jesus stands outside your door at this very moment and knocks; please respond to His call and invite

Him in. Because He is truly alive, the resurrected Jesus will fill you with the peace of His presence. The odor of death that surrounds you will immediately be transformed into the sweet fragrance of life. At the same time, you will become a fragrance of life to other believers and a sweet fragrance of Christ to God (2 Corinthians 2:14-16).

The dream about Amos' flameless torch

I continued to pray for Amos' salvation. God, who wants to see all people saved, gave me one more dream about Amos, to help him realize that without Christ, he could not escape death. Here is my dream:

"I walked towards the sea. I saw Amos standing in the water which was up to his knees. This sea water was very dirty. In his raised hand, Amos held a hollowed and empty clay torch. The torch had no flame.

In a loud voice, I told him to get out of the water. I begged him to climb up onto the shore, because a very dangerous creature lived in the sea. He did not believe me and ignored my warning.

I went closer so I could point out the danger to him. There, near Amos' bear feet, I saw the living enemy in the form of a great iron crab. Its body had the shape of a white human skull.

As soon as I pointed it out to Amos, he wanted to kill it. He pushed his flameless torch into the water and tried to crush the crab; but he could not crush the strong enemy in this way. Then, again using his hollowed, empty clay torch, he tried to push the ferocious creature away from himself; but

the iron crab had a lot of “weight” in the sea, and Amos could not push it away.

When Amos realized that his empty torch was useless, he became angry and cast it against the rocks on the shore where it shattered into many tiny pieces.

Understanding the Dream

Let us use questions and answers:

Q. Why was Amos standing in the sea?

A. Because Amos had not accepted Jesus as his personal Lord and Savior; he continued to be part of the symbolic “*sea*” of Isaiah 57:20,21: The wicked and unbelieving mankind.

Q. What did Amos’ empty and flameless torch symbolize?

A. It symbolized his empty self because the One who fills all things was not dwelling in him by His Spirit (Romans 8:8-11). Amos’ empty torch can be compared with the empty torches (Greek “λαμπάδας” [labadas]) of the five foolish virgins of Matthew 25:3.

Q. What did the crab which had the shape of a human skull symbolize?

A. Death! Amos, like all humans, was unable to conquer or to destroy death; he could not even push it away from himself. Death has a lot of “**weight**”, a lot of **authority** in the “**sea**”, that is, in the world without Jesus. Because of Adam’s sin, **death reigned over all mankind**. However, the

believers in Jesus have passed from death into life. **One day, death will be destroyed and all humankind will be free from this captivity and fear of death** (Romans 5:17; John 5:24; 1 Corinthians 15:20- 22,26; Revelation 21:4).

Encountering a spirit of death

One night, I was sitting at a table praying with two other people who professed their faith in Jesus. While two of us praised the Name of the Lord, the third one began to make funny noises with his mouth. Then, he began to laugh for no apparent reason and interrupted our praising.

I asked him if he would tell us why he was laughing. He refused and continued to laugh. Then I asked him if the laughter and the thoughts that caused it were for the glory of Jesus. Immediately, his facial muscles constricted; his lips were pulled back exposing his teeth, his eyes were slanted upwards, and a strong voice, which did not belong to him, came from his mouth saying, “No-o-o-o-o-o-o!”

I realized a demon had just manifested itself in him.

“Do you know who I am?” the demon asked facing me.

“No!” I replied, “Neither do I care who you are! In the Name of Jesus Christ, I command you to leave my friend and go!”

“No!” the demon said again, “I will not go! My name is Asmodius and this is my vessel. You can not make me leave.”

“It is not I, but Jesus who will make you leave!” I replied.

“You dirty Greek!” the demon said again, “Did you come here from Greece in order to destroy our kingdom?”

“No!” I answered, “It is not I but Jesus who will destroy your kingdom.”

Asmodius argued back and forth with me for a while, it threatened me a few times, but in the end, it obeyed in the Almighty Name of Jesus, and it came out screaming.

In the process of my friend’s deliverance from demonic captivity, I found out that there were many more demons that inhabited his body. Before I cast them out in the name of Jesus, I asked them to tell me their names and they answered. Some of their names were: **Homosexuality, Male Prostitution, Addiction to Nicotine, Addiction to Drugs, Tithing** (the law of giving one-tenth of one’s earnings to his/her religious institution in order to keep this part of the Mosaic Law. See Appendix C).

Obeying in the Name of Jesus, all the enslaving demons left my friend. The last one, like the rest of them, refused to come out. It told me that my friend had been its house for many years and that if it were to lose its house, it would prefer to kill him. It threatened to rip apart my friend’s insides. As soon as it said that it threw my friend to the floor and I saw my friend’s belly swell up rapidly. I rebuked the demon in the Name of Jesus and immediately my friend’s belly returned to its normal size.

My friend was lying flat on his back on the floor. He appeared to be dead. The demon spirit talked to me once again through my friend’s mouth and said,

“Dirty Greek, if it weren’t for the huge angel who stands next to me, I would have destroyed you!”

“What is your name?” I asked.

The upper half of my friend’s body was lifted, and as his distorted face (from the constricted muscles), moved towards me, the demon answered,

“My name is Dea ... th ... th ... th!”

Without fear of Death, I extended my hand towards my friend’s forehead and touched him. It felt as if his forehead were stuck in my palm. With a strong voice I said,

“Death, Jesus Christ said, ‘The gates of Hades will not prevail against My Church’; and I am part of His Church! Thus, I rebuke you in the Name of Jesus; I bind you in the Name of Jesus; and in the Name of Jesus, I command you to leave right now!”

What happened next made me realize the truthfulness of the words of Jesus, and the power of His Name. Death screamed loudly and left, leaving behind the obnoxious odor of death! The room was filled with the smell of rotting flesh! Hallelujah! Praise God! **Jesus conquered death by the power of His resurrection! It is true!** And the day will come when death and Hades will give up the dead who are in them; and they will be judged, every man according to their works. And death and Hades will be cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:13,14).

Dear Reader, if you have not accepted Jesus as your personal **God and Savior**, if you have not confessed with your

mouth that He is the “Lord”, in other words, the YHWH of Romans 10:9,13,14 whose Name one must call upon (or pray to), in order to be saved, and if you have not believed in your heart that God the Father has raised Him **bodily** from the dead, I beg you: **Please do so now --- this very moment.** Allow the resurrected Jesus to free you from the hands of death. Jesus wants to save you; this is the reason He died for you. However, salvation is given only to those who believe in Him (John 3:16).

The dream about the Living Christ

When I completed this book, I had the following dream:

“I was walking down the winding path of life. On its many turns, were statues which reminded the passers-by of various historical events. On both sides of the road, the land was filled with many rows of seats. It felt as if I were in a theatre.

Suddenly, in the distance, I saw a statue. It was the huge statue of a lamb which had been slaughtered. Its blood had stained its body. I realized that it was a representation of the Lamb of God.

A short distance away, a woman was walking. She also noticed the statue as it stood there on her right. She approached it and being filled with religious reverence she knelt before it, crossed herself, and bowed down to the ground. Then, she stood up and walked away from it.

I went close to the statue and looked at it with awe. My heart was filled with warm love and appreciation for what the Lamb of God had done for me. Then, behind that statue, I noticed another statue lying down on the ground. It was

the statue of the dead body of Jesus. On its head, I saw the crown of thorns; the blood had stained the body and His torn robe.

I was overpowered with awe and love for Him. I could not believe that what lay before me was a lifeless statue. I thought, “Jesus did not remain dead! He rose from the dead!”

This thought moved me to kneel and to touch the right hand of the statue. My heart leapt with joy. The hand was not cold! It felt like the hand of a living person!

“Jesus!” I cried, **“Lord! You are not dead! You are alive!”**

The Lord opened His eyes and looked into mine. Then He asked me:

“What is your name?”

As He spoke, I looked into His mouth. His tongue and teeth were bleeding from the beating.

“Lord!” I replied, “You know my name!”

A quick thought crossed my mind: “It was not unusual for the Man Jesus to ask such a question!” And immediately I answered,

“Lord, my name is Costas Lenis.”

As soon as I stated my name, the Lord stood up. He took my hand into His right hand and lifted me up into the air. I

noticed the Lord Jesus held another person with His other hand, but I could not see who this person was. Holding us both aloft, the Lord began to walk down the path of life.

Far away, I saw several men. They were Roman soldiers. I heard them laugh, mock Jesus and brag about the fact that they had nailed Him to the cross. They laughed and said that He was very weak and that He was unable to save Himself. Also, they were making jokes about Michael the Archangel saying that even he could not save Jesus from their hands!

I looked at the Lord who was carrying me; **“The fools!”** I thought, **“They do not know that Jesus lives!”**

The message of the foregoing vision is very powerful. Every person who is born on this planet walks the path of life for as long as our Creator will allow him/her to live. However, we all have a choice. We can either walk the path of life alone or we can walk it with Jesus. If we choose the latter, we must believe that although He **died** and was **buried, He was raised from the dead!** (1 Corinthians 15:3,4) Believing that He rose from the dead will enable us to have a personal relationship with the Living Christ. If we decide to have only religion instead of a personal relationship with Him, we will not experience God. We will be just like the religious woman in my dream, who, although she performed her religious rituals, Jesus did not come to life for her. For her, the Lamb of God remained a lifeless statue, and she continued to walk life’s path alone.

The faith of those who have decided to walk the path of life with Jesus should not be affected by the fact that others may look down on them. The apostle Paul said that the

apostles, (and I am sure that the same words could apply to all the true followers of Christ), have been made a (theatrical) spectacle to men and to angels (1 Corinthians 4:9). Even if others mock them (and they will), they should always focus on Jesus who lives forever. The enemies of Christ ridiculed Him, and they will ridicule His "Body" (Matthew 5:11). They are people who do not understand the things of God and even slander celestial beings (Jude 8-10). Therefore, my Friends, let us not think --- even for a moment --- that Jesus is a dead religious hero of the past. In fact, He rose from the dead and He is alive for evermore (Revelation 1:18). Let us walk hand in hand with Him and He will lift us up!