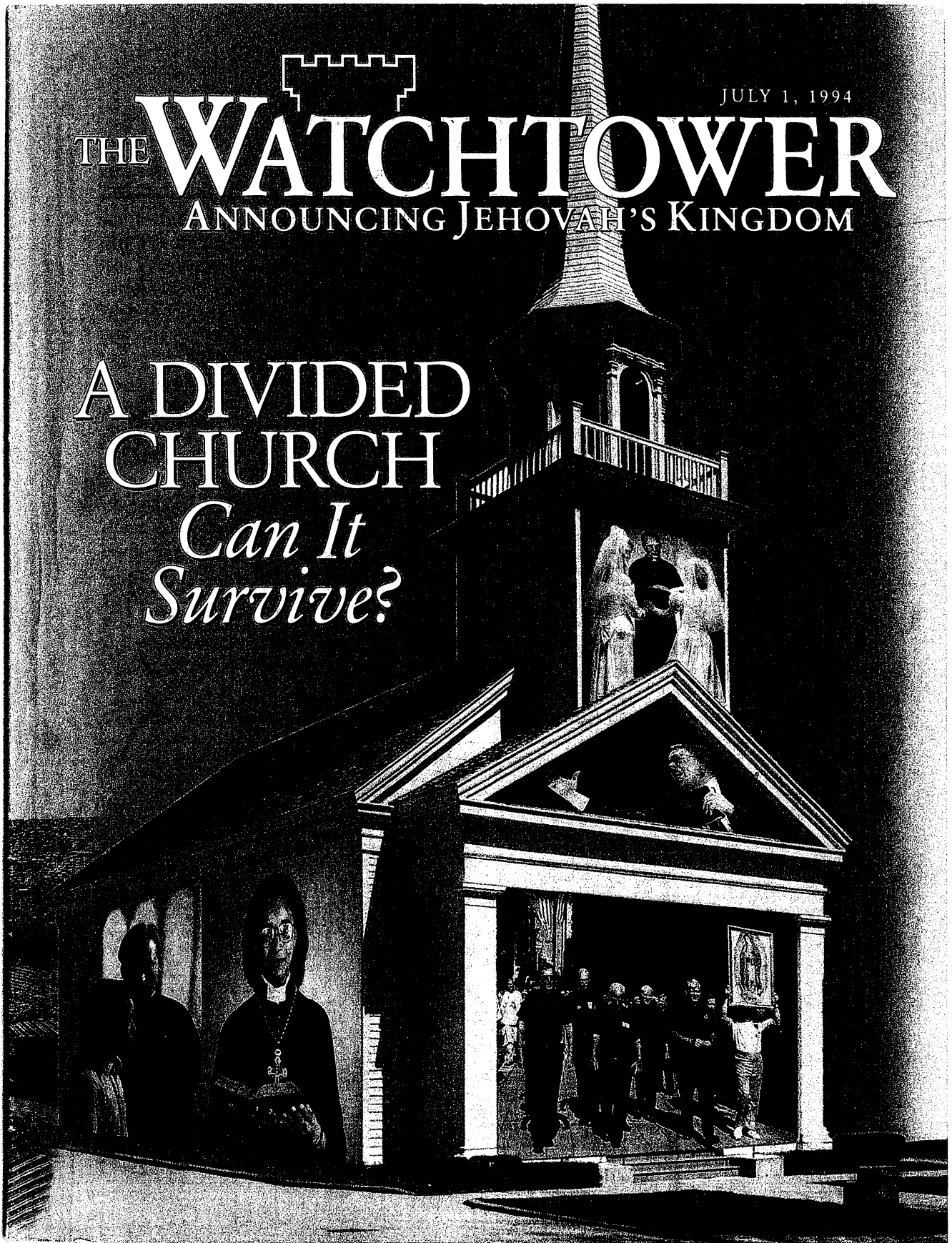


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THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

A DIVIDED
CHURCH
*Can It
Survive?*



A DIVIDED CHURCH

How Bad Is It?

“**L**IKE a large and startled family, living in a ramshackle old house whose front wall has suddenly collapsed, there seems to be a row going on in practically every room—with tambourine-bashing Jesus children screaming at elegant Anglo-Catholic homosexuals in black silk suits.”—*The Sunday Times*, London, April 11, 1993.

This family is the Church of England. The row is about admitting women to the priesthood. The graphic description of deep disunity applies just as well to all Christendom. With the patriarchs of the Orthodox Church and the pope condemning the decision to allow women to be priests, the overall result, one report concludes, is that “the dream of reunification with the rest of Christendom is farther away than ever.”

Demonstration by priests against abortion

How Divided Is the Church?

As we read at Matthew 7:21, Jesus Christ said that many would profess faith in him as Lord but still fail to ‘do the will of his Father.’ *Maclean’s* magazine observes: “Readers of Matthew seeking salvation could be excused for confusion about what exactly the will of God is, when Christians, and their churches, differ so profoundly on the question.” Following a poll among Canadians, it concluded that there is “tremendous diversity in Canadian Christians’ beliefs and practices—more diversity among members of any given denomination, in fact, than between the denominations themselves.”

According to its survey, 91 percent of Catholics agree with the use of artificial birth control even though their church condemns it; 78 percent think women should be allowed to become priests; and



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41 percent accept abortion "in certain circumstances." Disagreement within the different denominations on "a host of theological questions," *Maclean's* says, "underscores the divisions tearing at the seams of the mainstream churches."

Double Standards

Double standards as well as conflicting standards exist on morals. Some profess to uphold the Bible's principles, but others flout them. Was the "marriage" ceremony performed for two lesbians in the Metropolitan Church of Toronto, for example, in keeping with God's will? The participants evidently thought so. "We want to celebrate our love publicly and before God," they said.

One columnist asked how it was that "a Catholic archbishop with whom complaint after complaint had been filed, moved pedophilic priests to a different set of altar boys." Priest Andrew Greeley suggests that from 2,000 to 4,000 priests may have abused 100,000 underage victims, oftentimes with little done about it.

A disunited church produces disunited people. In the Balkans, both Serbian and Croat "Christians" feel that Christ is with them in their "just" war. Many wear crucifixes in battle; one, it is reported, "always held his crucifix in his mouth when the fighting was fiercest."

"There Should Not Be Divisions Among You"

True, the Bible leaves some matters to conscience, but this should not leave room for such division. The apostle Paul clearly states: "You should all speak [and act] in agreement, and . . . there should not be divisions among you."—1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:15, 16.

An honest look at "Christianity" some two thousand years after the apostle Paul wrote those words raises some very serious questions. Why are "Christians" so divided? Can such a divided church survive? Will there ever be a united Christendom? The next article will consider these questions.

A DIVIDED CHURCH *Can It Survive?*

"ALL who profess the saving truth of Christ belong to the visible Church. The divisions of Christendom—between East and West, and between Rome and the churches of the Reformation—are divisions within the one Church." (*Christians in Communion*) That is how one author views Christianity—as a

widely scattered family of religions, all professing some kind of faith in Jesus Christ.

However, it is a divided family, with conflicting beliefs and standards of behavior. "Present-day Christianity . . . has lower standards for church membership than those for getting on a bus," says one observer. How, then, should we diagnose its

spiritual state? Catholic bishop Basil Butler concludes: "A divided Christianity is very ill indeed." (*The Church and Unity*) How did the illness begin? Are there hopes for recovery?

"The Man of Lawlessness"

The apostle Paul warned that disunity would develop. To Christians in Thessalonica who thought that Christ's presence was imminent, he wrote: "Let no one seduce you in any manner, because it [Jehovah's day] will not come unless the apostasy comes first and the man of lawlessness gets revealed, the son of destruction."—2 Thessalonians 2:3.

This "man of lawlessness" introduced apostasy and rebellion into the Christian congregation. Who is he? Not any individual man but, rather, the clergy class of Christendom. This class elevated itself over the apostate congregation relatively soon after the death of Jesus' apostles, and eventually came to teach pagan philosophies, such as the Trinity and the immortality of the human soul. (Acts 20:29, 30; 2 Peter 2:1-3) Like a lethal virus, it infected the professing Christian congregation with demon-inspired ideas that would lead inevitably to disunity.—Galatians 5:7-10.

The contagion had already started in the apostle Paul's day. He wrote: "True, the mystery of this lawlessness is already at work; but only till he who is right now acting as a restraint gets to be out of the way." (2 Thessalonians 2:7) The apostles acted as a restraint against the poison of apostasy. When their unifying influence was removed, unrestrained apostasy spread like gangrene.—1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 2:16-18.

The activities of this "man of lawlessness" continue unabated. In a recent report

on "a church in sexual and theological torment," one archdeacon of the Church of England is quoted as complaining: "Motions calling on the clergy not to indulge in sexual activity outside marriage are flung out. Practising homosexuals are ordained. They have made good evil and evil good."—*The Sunday Times Magazine*, London, November 22, 1992.

Wheat and Weeds

Jesus Christ himself taught that true Christianity would temporarily disappear from view. He said that the founding of the Christian congregation was like a man sowing fine seed in his field. But, Jesus said, "his enemy came and oversowed weeds in among the wheat." When his slaves asked whether they should try to uproot the weeds, the field owner said: "No; that by no chance, while collecting the weeds, you uproot the wheat with them." How long would this mingling of wheat and weeds continue? The owner of the field said: "Let both grow together until the harvest."—Matthew 13:25, 29, 30.

Until "the harvest," or time of separation during the last days of the "system of things," imitation Christians grew alongside true Christians. (Matthew 28:20) Satan the Devil used the apostates to create a corrupt and divided imitation Christian congregation. (Matthew 13:36-39) They produced a shameful counterfeit of genuine Christianity. (2 Corinthians 11:3, 13-15; Colossians 2:8) As the church fragmented over the centuries, it became increasingly difficult to identify true Christians.

New Divisions

In more modern times, says *The Testing of the Churches—1932-1982*, "[n]ew divisions have appeared, in particular the charismatic movement, with its emphasis on

personal faith and experience.” Interestingly, some see the born again, charismatic movements as signs of spiritual recovery rather than new divisions. Northern Ireland, for example, experienced such a revival in the 1850’s. High hopes were raised. A report told of “fraternal union . . . among the Presbyterian, Wesleyan, and Independent ministers” and said that “every day brought new tales of trances, sleeps, visions, dreams and miracles.”—*Religious Revivals*.

Many saw these dramatic manifestations as evidence of God’s spirit working to revive his church. “The church of God,” said one observer, “in its highest sense is in these districts revived.” However, even though this particular revival was heralded as “a glorious and unprecedented epoch in the religious history of Ulster,” it and other revivals like it have not produced religious unity among those who claim a spiritual rebirth.

Such ones will argue that they are united in fundamentals. But this is the same argument used by the rest of Christendom, who rationalize that “what unites Christians is already far more important than the matters that still divide them.” (*The Church and Unity*) Christendom claims:

In Our Next Issue

Why Does Fear Grip the World?

Work Hard for the Salvation
of Your Household

How Do You Settle Differences?

“Our fundamental unity with each other and with all our fellow Christians is rooted in our baptism in Christ.” (*Christians in Communion*) To say that the divisions are unimportant because of common faith in Jesus is, however, like saying that cancer is not serious as long as your heart is strong.

The reality is that such modern religious movements have added to the confusion and produced spiritual anarchy as persuasive teachers corral followers for themselves. Jim Jones and David Koresh are recent examples of spiritual leaders who misled thousands. (Matthew 15:14) One Baptist minister is a leading member of the Ku Klux Klan. He links his campaign for white supremacy with a religious revival and says that those who take part in it will “be given the strength of providence on high, given the courage of He who died on Calvary [Jesus Christ].”

What about the supposed miracles, the powerful works, and the signs performed in the name of Jesus? Remember Jesus Christ’s strong warning that it is, not those merely saying “Lord, Lord” who gain his approval, but, rather, ‘those who do the will of his Father.’ Many today do not even know the name of his Father, Jehovah. Jesus warned of those who would ‘expel demons in his name, and perform powerful works in this name’ and yet would be “workers of lawlessness.”—Matthew 7: 21-23.

“Get Out Of Her My People”

What is the prognosis for sick Christendom? Very poor. Should we, then, take Catholic bishop Butler’s advice, to “join [the church] without more ado and to lend our aid to her continual ‘purification’ from within her ranks”? No! Divided and divisive Christendom will not survive. (Mark 3:24, 25) She is part of a world empire of

false religion called Babylon the Great. (Revelation 18:2, 3) This bloodguilty religious system faces imminent destruction at God's hand.

The Bible does not suggest that genuine Christians stay within this corrupt religious organization and try to reform her from inside. Rather, it exhorts: "Get out of her, my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues. For her sins have massed together clear up to heaven, and God has called her acts of injustice to mind."—Revelation 18:4, 5.

"Get out" to where? Remember, Jesus promised that at the time of the harvest, true Christians would be gathered together

"God has called her acts of injustice to mind"

again into a worldwide unity. The prophet Micah also foretold such a regathering with these words: "In unity I shall set them, like a flock in the pen." (Micah 2:12) Has this happened?

Yes! genuine Christians are now being gathered into a united brotherhood earth wide. Who are they? They are the Christian congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, who unitedly declare the good news about God's Kingdom in 231 lands. They have rejected Christendom's divisive teachings and seek to worship God according to the truth of his Word.—John 8:31, 32; 17:17.

You are warmly invited to speak with them. If you would like to know more about Jehovah's Witnesses, please contact them locally or through the appropriate address on page 2 of this magazine.





AT WHICH TABLE ARE YOU FEEDING?

“You cannot be partaking of ‘the table of Jehovah’ and the table of demons.”
—1 CORINTHIANS 10:21.

THESSE inspired words of the apostle Paul show that two figurative tables are set before mankind. Each table is identified by the kind of symbolic food placed upon it, and all of us are eating at one or the other. However, if we wish to please God, we cannot be feeding at his table and at the same time be nibbling at the table of demons. The apostle Paul warned: “The things which the nations sac-

1. What tables are set before us, and what warning does the apostle Paul give regarding them?

rifice they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers with the demons. You cannot be drinking the cup of Jehovah and the cup of demons; you cannot be partaking of ‘the table of Jehovah’ and the table of demons.” —1 Corinthians 10:20, 21.

² Paul’s words remind us of the communion sacrifices that the ancient Israelites

2. (a) What table of Jehovah existed in the days of ancient Israel, and who shared in the communion sacrifices? (b) What does partaking of the table of Jehovah mean today?

offered under Jehovah's Law. The altar of God was called a table, and the one bringing the animal to be sacrificed was said to have communion with Jehovah and with the priests. How? First, Jehovah shared in the sacrifice because the blood was sprinkled upon his altar and the fat was consumed by flames underneath. Second, the priest shared in that he (and his family) ate the roasted breast and right leg of the animal sacrificed. And third, the offerer shared by eating the rest of it. (Leviticus 7: 11-36) Today, partaking of the table of Jehovah means that we give him the kind of worship that he requires, as exemplified by Jesus and his apostles. To do this, we must feed spiritually on what Jehovah provides through his Word and organization. The Israelites, who enjoyed special communion with Jehovah at his table, were forbidden to offer sacrifices to demons at their table. Spiritual Israelites and their "other sheep" companions are under the same divine prohibition.—John 10:16.

³ How could one become guilty of partaking of the table of demons in our day? By serving the interests of anything opposed to Jehovah. The table of demons includes all demonic propaganda, which is designed to mislead and to turn us away from Jehovah. Who would want to feed his heart and mind on such poison? True Christians refuse to share in the sacrifices that most people today offer to the gods of war and riches.—Matthew 6:24.

Avoiding "the Table of Demons"

⁴ The question all of us face is, At which table am I feeding? We cannot escape the

3. How could one become guilty of partaking of the table of demons in our day?

4. What question do all of us face, and why would we not knowingly want to partake of the table of demons?

fact that we are obliged to eat at one table or the other. (Compare Matthew 12:30.) We would not knowingly want to be partaking of the table of demons. To do that would cost us the favor of the only true and living God, Jehovah. On the other hand, to partake of food only at Jehovah's table leads to our everlasting life in happiness! (John 17:3) There is a saying that a person is what he eats. Anyone, then, who wants to keep in good physical and mental health has to watch his diet. Just as high-fat junk food, though tastily prepared with chemical additives, does not contribute to our continued physical health, so the propaganda of this world laced with demonic ideas is bad figurative junk food that will corrupt our minds.

⁵ The apostle Paul foretold that during the last days, people would be led astray by the "teachings of demons." (1 Timothy 4:1) Not only are such demonic teachings found in false religious beliefs but they are also widely promulgated in other ways. For example, we need to analyze and weigh what books and magazines we and our children read, what television programs we view, and what plays and films we watch. (Proverbs 14:15) If for recreation we read fiction, does it feature senseless violence, illicit sex, or occult practices? If we read nonfiction in order to be instructed, does it expound a philosophy or way of life "not according to Christ"? (Colossians 2:8) Are empty speculations presented, or is involvement in worldly social movements advocated? Does it foster the determination to get very rich? (1 Timothy 6:9) Is it a publication that subtly presents divisive teachings that are un-Christlike? If the answer is yes and we continue to read or view such material, we risk

5. How can we avoid taking in demonic teachings today?



Jehovah's table is brimming with the best of spiritual food

feeding at the table of demons. Today, there are hundreds of thousands of publications that promote worldly philosophies that seem so enlightened and current. (Ecclesiastes 12:12) But none of this propaganda is really new; nor does it work for one's benefit and betterment, any more than what Satan cunningly said to Eve worked for her betterment.—2 Corinthians 11:3.

⁶ Therefore, when Satan invites us to taste his demonic junk food, how should we respond? As Jesus did when he was tempted by Satan to turn stones into bread. Jesus replied: "It is written, 'Man must live, not on bread alone, but on every utterance com-

6. When Satan invites us to taste his demonic junk food, how should we, in effect, respond?

ing forth through Jehovah's mouth.'" And when the Devil offered Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world and their glory" if he would fall down and do an act of worship to Satan, Jesus responded: "Go away, Satan! For it is written, 'It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service.'"—Matthew 4: 3, 4, 8-10.

⁷ Jehovah's table and the table spread by his demonic enemies can never be reconciled! Oh, yes, it has been tried before. Recall the ancient Israelites in the days of the prophet Elijah. The people claimed to worship Jehovah, but they believed that other gods, such as Baal, promised prosperity. Elijah approached the people and said: "How long will you be limping upon two

7. Why are we deluding ourselves if we think we can successfully feed both at Jehovah's table and at the table of demons?

different opinions? If Jehovah is the true God, go following him; but if Baal is, go following him." Undeniably, the Israelites were hobbling "first on one leg then on the other." (1 Kings 18:21; *The Jerusalem Bible*) Elijah challenged the priests of Baal to prove the godship of their deity. The God that could bring fire down from heaven upon a sacrifice would prove to be the true God. Despite much effort, the priests of Baal failed. Then Elijah simply prayed: "O Jehovah, answer me, that this people may know that you, Jehovah, are the true God." Immediately fire from Jehovah shot down from heaven and consumed the water-drenched animal sacrifice. Stirred by the convincing demonstration of Jehovah's godship, the people obeyed Elijah and put all 450 prophets of Baal to death. (1 Kings 18:24-40) So today, we must recognize Jehovah as the true God and decisively turn to feeding only at his table if we have not already done so.

'The Faithful Slave' Serves Jehovah's Table

⁸ The Lord Jesus Christ foretold that during his presence a "faithful and discreet slave" would provide spiritual food for his disciples: "Happy is that slave if his master on arriving finds him doing so. Truly I say to you, He will appoint him over all his belongings." (Matthew 24:45-47) This slave has proved to be, not any single individual, but the class of dedicated, anointed Christians. This class has put upon Jehovah's table the finest spiritual food for both the anointed remnant and the "great crowd." Now over four million strong, the great crowd have taken their stand with the anointed remnant for the universal sover-

8. What slave did Jesus foretell he would use to feed his disciples spiritually during his presence, and what is the slave's identity?

eignty of Jehovah God and for his Kingdom by which he will sanctify his holy name.—Revelation 7:9-17.

⁹ This faithful slave class has been using the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society to provide spiritual nourishment for all of Jehovah's Witnesses. While Christendom and the rest of this system of things are starving for the lack of life-giving spiritual food, Jehovah's people are feasting. (Amos 8:11) This is in fulfillment of the prophecy at Isaiah 25:6: "Jehovah of armies will certainly make for all the peoples, in this mountain, a banquet of well-oiled dishes, a banquet of wine kept on the dregs, of well-oiled dishes filled with marrow, of wine kept on the dregs, filtered." As verses 7 and 8 show, this feast will continue everlastingly. What a blessing it is for all in Jehovah's visible organization now, and what a blessing it will continue to be in the future!

Beware of the Poisonous Food on the Table of Demons

¹⁰ Food on the table of demons is poisonous. Consider, for example, the food dispensed by the evil slave class and the apostates. It does not nourish or build up; it is not wholesome. It cannot be, for the apostates have stopped feeding at Jehovah's table. As a result, whatever they had developed of the new personality is gone. What motivates them is, not holy spirit, but vitriolic bitterness. They are obsessed with only one aim—beating their former fellow slaves, as Jesus foretold.—Matthew 24:48, 49.

9. What instrument has the slave class been using to provide spiritual food for Jehovah's Witnesses, and how is their spiritual feasting prophetically described?

10. (a) What kind of food is dispensed by the evil slave class, and what is their motivation? (b) How do the evil slave class treat their former fellow slaves?

¹¹ For example, away back in 1909, the then president of the Watch Tower Society, C. T. Russell, wrote about those who turned away from Jehovah's table and then began to mistreat their former fellow slaves. *The Watch Tower* of October 1, 1909, said: "All who cut loose from the Society and its work, instead of prospering themselves or upbuilding others in the faith and in the graces of the spirit, seemingly do the reverse—attempt injury to the Cause they once served, and, with more or less noise, gradually sink into oblivion, harming only themselves and others possessed of a similarly contentious spirit. . . . If some think that they can get as good or better provender at other tables, or that they can produce as good or better themselves—let these take their course. . . . But while we are willing that others should go anywhere and everywhere to find food and light to their satisfaction, strange to say, those who become our opponents take a very different course. Instead of saying in the manly fashion of the world, 'I have found something which I prefer; goodbye!' these manifest anger, malice, hatred, strife, 'works of the flesh and of the devil' such as we have never known worldly people to exhibit. They seem inoculated with madness, Satanic hydrophobia [rabies]. Some of them smite us and then claim that we did the smiting. They are ready to say and write contemptible falsities and to stoop to do meanness."

¹² Yes, apostates publish literature that resorts to distortions, half-truths, and outright falsehood. They even picket Witness conventions, trying to trap the unwary. Hence, it would be a dangerous thing to

11. What did C. T. Russell write as to one's choice of spiritual food, and how did he describe those who forsake Jehovah's table?

12. (a) How do apostates beat their fellow slaves? (b) Why is it dangerous out of curiosity to feed on the writings of apostates?

allow our curiosity to move us to feed on such writings or to listen to their abusive speech! While we might not think it a risk for us personally, the hazard remains. Why? For one thing, some of the apostate literature presents falsehoods by means of "smooth talk" and "counterfeit words." (Romans 16:17, 18; 2 Peter 2:3) What would you expect from the table of demons? And while the apostates may also present certain facts, these are usually taken out of context with the goal of drawing others away from the table of Jehovah. All their writings simply criticize and tear down! Nothing is upbuilding.

¹³ Jesus said: "By their fruits you will recognize them." (Matthew 7:16) What, now, are the fruits of the apostates and their publications? Four things mark their propaganda. (1) Cleverness. Ephesians 4:14 says that they are "cunning in contriving error." (2) Prideful intelligence. (3) Lack of love. (4) Dishonesty in various forms. These are the very ingredients of the food that is on the table of demons, all of which is designed to undermine the faith of Jehovah's people.

¹⁴ And there is another aspect. To what have the apostates returned? In many cases, they have reentered the darkness of Christendom and its doctrines, such as the belief that all Christians go to heaven. Moreover, most no longer take a firm Scriptural stand regarding blood, neutrality, and the need to witness about God's Kingdom. We, though, have escaped the darkness of Babylon the Great, and we never want to return to it. (Revelation 18:2, 4) As loyal servants of Jehovah, why would we even want to peek at the propaganda put out by these rejecters of Jehovah's table

13, 14. What are the fruits of the apostates and their propaganda?

who now verbally beat those who are helping us take in healthful words?—2 Timothy 4:13.

¹⁵ Some may be inquisitive about accusations that the apostates make. But we should take to heart the principle at Deuteronomy 12:30, 31. Here Jehovah through Moses warned the Israelites about what to avoid once they dispossessed the pagan inhabitants of the Promised Land. “Watch out for yourself for fear you may be entrapped after them, after they have been annihilated from before you, and for fear you may inquire respecting their gods, saying, ‘How was it these nations used to serve their gods? And I, yes, I, will do the same way.’ You must not do that way to Jehovah your God.” Yes, Jehovah God knows how human curiosity works. Remember Eve, and also Lot’s wife! (Luke 17:32; 1 Timothy 2:14) ~~Let us never give ear to what the apostates are saying or doing.~~ Rather, let us be busy building people up and loyally feeding at the table of Jehovah!

Only Jehovah’s Table Will Remain

¹⁶ Shortly, the great tribulation will suddenly break out, moving quickly to a climax in “the war of the great day of God the Almighty.” (Revelation 16:14, 16) It will reach a crescendo as Jehovah destroys this system of things and the figurative table at which the world’s nations have been feeding. Jehovah will also overthrow the entire invisible organization of Satan the Devil with its hordes of demons. Those who have continued to feed at Satan’s spiritual table,

15. What Bible principle helps us to take the wise course when we hear of accusations the apostates make?

16. (a) What will shortly happen to Satan, his demons, and the figurative table at which the world’s nations have been feeding? (b) What will happen to all humans who continue to feed at the table of demons?

the table of demons, will be forced to attend a literal meal, no, not as partakers, but as the main course—to their destruction!—See Ezekiel 39:4; Revelation 19:17, 18.

¹⁷ Only Jehovah’s table will remain. Those who are appreciatively feeding at it will be preserved and will be privileged to eat there for all time to come. Never again will food shortages of any kind threaten them. (Psalm 67:6; 72:16) In perfect health they will serve Jehovah God in Paradise! At last the stirring words of Revelation 21:4 will be magnificently fulfilled: “He will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.” With opposition a thing of the past, Jehovah God’s universal sovereignty will obtain everywhere forever and ever as endless divine favor pours upon redeemed mankind occupying the Paradise earth. To gain this reward, let all of us be determined to partake exclusively of Jehovah’s table, which is brimming with the best of spiritual food!

17. What blessings come to those who feed exclusively at Jehovah’s table?

How Would You Answer?

- How can we avoid being misled by demonic teachings?
- Why can we not successfully feed both at Jehovah’s table and at the table of demons?
- What kind of food is dispensed by apostates?
- Why is it dangerous to be curious about the charges of apostates?
- What are the fruits of the apostates?