

A woman with short, wavy brown hair, wearing a brown jacket over a white shirt, is looking down at a newspaper she is holding. She has a thoughtful or concerned expression, with her hand resting on her chin. The background is a deep red color with a faint grid pattern. A jagged red line, resembling a stock market graph, runs across the background. At the top left, there is a small icon of a watchtower. The title 'THE WATCHTOWER' is written in large, white, serif capital letters, with the watchtower icon integrated into the letter 'W'. Below the title, the subtitle 'ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM' is written in smaller, white, serif capital letters. The date 'AUGUST 15, 1998' is printed in the top right corner.

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

AUGUST 15, 1998

**Why
the Crisis of
CONFIDENCE?**

THE WATCHTOWER®

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

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

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'CAN you really trust anyone nowadays?" You may have heard some frustrated individual ask this question. Or you may even have asked the question yourself when emotionally troubled over a turn of events in your life.

Undeniably, there is a worldwide lack of confidence in institutions and in other people. Oftentimes, this lack of confidence is justified. Does anyone really expect most politicians to keep all their preelection promises? A 1990 survey of 1,000 students in Germany indicated that whereas 16.5 percent of them were confident that politicians could solve world problems, twice as many expressed strong doubts. And a majority said that they lacked confidence in the ability of politicians to solve problems as well as in their willingness to do so.

The newspaper *Stuttgarter Nachrichten* complained: "Too many politicians have first their own interests in mind and then, just possibly, those of their voters." People in other countries agree. The newspaper *The European* said of one land: "Youth's cyni-

cism towards the politicians is well founded and shared by their elders." It noted that 'the electorate regularly throws the political parties out of office.' The newspaper further said: "Anyone spending time among young people [there] is immediately struck by their lack of confidence and sense of dislocation." Yet, without public confidence, a democratic government can achieve little. Former U.S. President John F. Kennedy once noted: "The basis of effective government is public confidence."

As to confidence in the world of finance, sudden economic reversals and get-rich-quick schemes turned sour have caused many to be hesitant. When world stock markets fluctuated wildly in October 1997, a newsmagazine spoke about "a raging and sometimes irrational lack of confidence" and about "the no-confidence contagion." It also said that "confidence has been so drained [in one Asian country] that the very existence of the regime . . . seems threatened." In summary, it stated the obvious: "Economies rely on confidence."

WHY THE CRISIS OF CONFIDENCE?



Religion is also failing to inspire confidence. The German religious journal *Christ in der Gegenwart* sadly comments: "The level of confidence placed in the Church by the populace continues to fall." Between 1986 and 1992, the number of Germans with much, or at least a good measure of, confidence in the church fell from 40 to 33 percent. In fact, in former East Germany, it dropped to below 20 percent. Conversely, people who had little or no confidence in the church grew from 56 to 66 percent in what was formerly West Germany and to 71 percent in the former East Germany.

A drop in confidence has become apparent in fields other than politics, finance, and religion—the three pillars of human society. Another example is law enforcement. Loopholes in criminal codes, difficulties in administering the law justly, and questionable court decisions have seriously shaken people's trust. According to *Time* magazine, "the frustrations of citizens and police have reached a point of no confidence in a system that repeatedly puts dangerous felons back on the street." In the face of charges of police corruption and brutality, confidence even in the police has plummeted.

Regarding international politics, aborted peace talks and broken cease-fires point up a lack of confidence. Bill Richardson, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, put his finger on the main stumbling block to achieving peace in the Middle East, saying simply: "There is a lack of confidence."

Meanwhile on a more personal level, many people lack confidence even in close relatives and friends, the very ones that humans normally turn to for understanding and comfort when they have problems. It is much like the situation that the Hebrew prophet Micah described: "Do not put your faith in a companion. Do not put your trust in a confidential friend. From her who is

lying in your bosom guard the openings of your mouth."—Micah 7:5.

A Sign of the Times

German psychologist Arthur Fischer was recently quoted as saying: "Confidence in society's development and in one's personal future has actually dropped dramatically on all fronts. Young people doubt that society's institutions can help them. Their confidence goes to the point of nonexistence, whether it be political, religious, or any other organization." It is no wonder that sociologist Ulrich Beck speaks about a "culture of doubt" toward long-standing authorities, institutions, and experts.

In such a culture, people tend to withdraw, to reject all authority, and to live according to personal standards, making decisions independent of counsel or direction from others. Some become overly suspicious, possibly even inconsiderate, when dealing with those they feel they cannot trust anymore. This attitude promotes an unhealthy climate, such as described in the Bible: "In the last days critical times hard to deal with will be here. For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, self-assuming, haughty, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, disloyal, having no natural affection, not open to any agreement, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, without love of goodness, betrayers, headstrong, puffed up with pride, lovers of pleasures rather than lovers of God, having a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power." (2 Timothy 3:1-5; Proverbs 18:1) Truly, today's crisis of confidence is a sign of the times, a sign of "the last days."

In a world suffering a crisis of confidence and teeming with people like those described above, life cannot really be enjoyed to the full. But is it realistic to think that things will change? Can today's crisis of confidence be overcome? If so, how and when?

CONFIDENCE CAN BE RESTORED!



ALTHOUGH the current crisis of confidence is a sign of “the last days,” lack of confidence also became apparent thousands of years ago. (2 Timothy 3:1) It first arose in a most unlikely place—in a paradise. The Bible says of the location: “God planted a garden in Eden, toward the east, and there he put the man whom he had formed. Thus Jehovah God made to grow out of the ground every tree desirable to one’s sight and good for food and also the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and bad.”—Genesis 2:8, 9.

Subsequent verses shed light on what this has to do with the modern-day crisis of confidence. We read: “Jehovah God also laid this command upon the man: ‘From every tree of the garden you may eat to satisfaction. But as for the tree of the knowledge of good and bad you must not eat from it, for in the day you eat from it you will positively die.’” (Genesis 2:16, 17) Did Adam have any reason to doubt what Jehovah said?

We read on: “Now the serpent proved to be the most cautious of all the wild beasts of the field that Jehovah God had made. So it began to say to the woman: ‘Is it real-

ly so that God said you must not eat from every tree of the garden?’ At this the woman said to the serpent: ‘Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat. But as for eating of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, God has said, “You must not eat from it, no, you must not touch it that you do not die.”’ At this the serpent said to the woman: ‘You positively will not die. For God knows that in the very day of your eating from it your eyes are bound to

Lack of confidence in God leads to damaged human relations

be opened and you are bound to be like God, knowing good and bad.’ Consequently the woman saw that the tree was good for food and that it was something to be longed for to the eyes, yes, the tree was desirable to look upon. So she began taking of its fruit and eating it. Afterward she gave some also to her husband when with her and he began eating it.”—Genesis 3:1-6.

In ignoring God’s clear warning, Adam

and Eve demonstrated lack of confidence in Jehovah. They mirrored God's adversary Satan, who had spoken to Eve through the literal serpent. Satan lacked confidence in Jehovah's way of ruling. Because of this and a proud and ambitious heart, he rebelled against God and misled humans into doing the same. He influenced them into thinking that God was not to be trusted.

The Result? Strained Relations

You may have observed that individuals who do not trust others find it difficult to maintain friendships. Publilius Syrus, a Latin writer of the first century B.C.E., wrote: "Confidence is the only bond of friendship." By their act of rebellion, Adam and Eve showed that they did not trust God. Hence, God certainly had no reason to trust

Humans are worthy of confidence only to the degree that they act in harmony with godly principles

them. As a result of a breakdown in trust, or confidence, the first humans lost God's friendship. There is no indication that Jehovah ever spoke to them again after he condemned them for their rebellion.

The relationship between Adam and Eve also suffered. Jehovah warned Eve: "In birth pangs you will bring forth children, and your craving will be for your husband, and *he will dominate you.*" (Genesis 3:16) *The Jerusalem Bible* says: "He will lord it over you." Instead of exercising loving headship over his wife, as God had wanted, Adam now became her master, lording it over her.

After they had sinned, Adam tried to shift the blame to his wife. In his opinion it

was because of what she had done that they were ejected from a perfect garden into an unfinished earth, doomed to slave under less than ideal conditions before returning to the dust. (Genesis 3:17-19) We can well imagine that this was a source of friction between the two. Adam may have overreacted, voicing that he would never listen to Eve again. Possibly he felt justified in telling her, in effect, 'From now on, I'm the boss!' Eve, on the other hand, may have seen that Adam had failed in his role as family head, causing her to lose confidence in him. At any rate, by expressing a lack of confidence in God, humans lost their friendship with him and damaged their relationship with one another.

Whom Can We Trust?

Not everyone deserves our confidence, as the example of Adam and Eve illustrates. How can we know who does and who does not deserve our confidence?

Psalm 146:3 advises us: "Do not put your trust in nobles, nor in the son of earthling man, to whom no salvation belongs." And at Jeremiah 17:5-7, we read: "Cursed is the able-bodied man who puts his trust in earthling man and actually makes flesh his arm, and whose heart turns away from Jehovah himself." On the other hand, "blessed is the able-bodied man who puts his trust in Jehovah, and whose confidence Jehovah has become."

Granted, putting confidence in humans is not always wrong. Those texts are simply making the point that confidence in God is never misplaced, but putting confidence in imperfect humans can at times lead to disaster. For example, people who trust humans to achieve what only God can do—provide salvation and bring full peace with security—are headed for disappointment.—Psalm 46:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:3.



Actually, humans and human institutions merit confidence only to the degree that they act in harmony with God's purposes and demonstrate godly principles. Thus, if we are to inspire others to have confidence in us, we must speak the truth, being honest and reliable. (Proverbs 12:19; Ephesians 4:25; Hebrews 13:18) Only by conducting ourselves in agreement with Bible principles will the trust others place in us be justified and prove to be a source of mutual strength and encouragement.

Restoring Confidence

Jehovah's Witnesses have a solid basis for placing confidence in God and encouraging others to do likewise. Jehovah is faithful and loyal, one who can always be relied upon to do what he has said, because "it is impossible for God to lie." Confidence placed in the God of love will never lead to disappointment.—Hebrews 6:18; Psalm 94:14; Isaiah 46:9-11; 1 John 4:8.

People who are united in having confidence in Jehovah and who live by his prin-

ciples are strongly motivated to show confidence in one another. In a world suffering a crisis of confidence, what a joy to find people who are trustworthy! Imagine how different the world would be if we could have complete confidence in what everyone else says or does! In the coming new world that God has promised this will be the case. Never again will there be any crisis of confidence!

Would you like to live then? If so, Jehovah's Witnesses invite you to strengthen your confidence in God and in his promises by learning more about his requirements for life. A study of the Bible offers proof that God exists, that he is interested in mankind's welfare, and that he will soon act to correct world problems by means of his Kingdom. Millions have learned to put confidence in God and in his Word, the Bible. Jehovah's Witnesses will gladly demonstrate to you the public service of a Bible study course they offer free of charge. Or write to the publishers of this magazine for further information.

MAKE THE BEST OF YOUR LIFE



THE father was in the house, in bed, dying of cancer. His son was in the workshop, tidying up his father's woodworking tools. As he handled the tools, he thought about the wonderful things his father had made with them. Though the workshop was next to the house, he knew that his father would never enter there again, never again hold the tools that he was so skilled at using. That time was past.

The son thought of the scripture at Ecclesiastes 9:10: "All that your hand finds to do, do with your very power, for there is no work nor devising nor knowledge nor wisdom in Sheol [the grave], the place to which you are going." He knew that scripture well. He had used it many times when teaching others the Bible truth that death is a state of inactivity. Now the force of Solomon's argument struck his heart—we should live life fully and enjoy our days while we can because the time will come when we are no longer able to do so.

Enjoy Life

Throughout the book of Ecclesiastes, wise King Solomon exhorts his readers to find enjoyment in life. Chapter 3, for example, states: "I have come to know that there is nothing better for [people] than to rejoice and to do good during one's life; and also that every man should eat and indeed drink and see good for all his hard work. It is the gift of God."—Ecclesiastes 3:12, 13.

Solomon was inspired by God to repeat this thought: "Look! The best thing that I myself have seen, which is pretty, is that one should eat and drink and see good for

all his hard work with which he works hard under the sun for the number of the days of his life that the true God has given him, for that is his portion."—Ecclesiastes 5:18.

Similarly, he exhorts young people: "Rejoice, young man, in your youth, and let your heart do you good in the days of your young manhood [or, womanhood], and walk in the ways of your heart and in the things seen by your eyes." (Ecclesiastes 11:9a) How fine it is to enjoy to the full the strength and vigor of youth!—Proverbs 20:29.

'Remember Your Creator'

Of course, Solomon does not mean that it is wise to pursue *everything* that may appeal to our heart or eyes. (Compare 1 John 2:16.) This is clear from what he writes next: "But know that on account of all these [pursuits that may satisfy your desires] the true God will bring you into judgment." (Ecclesiastes 11:9b) Whatever our age, we should remember that God observes what we do with our lives and will judge us accordingly.

How foolish it is to reason that we can live a self-centered life and postpone godly devotion until our later years! Our life could be cut short at any time. Even if it is not, serving God becomes no easier in old age. Recognizing this fact, Solomon writes: "Remember, now, your Grand Creator in the days of your young manhood, before the calamitous days proceed to come, or the years have arrived when you will say: 'I have no delight in them.'"—Ecclesiastes 12:1.

Advancing age takes its toll. In sym-



bolic terms Solomon next describes the effects of advanced years. Hands and arms tremble, legs weaken, and teeth become few. Hair becomes white and falls out. Sleep is so light that one is awakened by the sound of a bird. The senses—sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste—all fade. The weakened body gives rise to fear of falling and other “terrors” on public thoroughfares. Eventually the person dies.—Ecclesiastes 12:2-7.

Old age is particularly calamitous for those who have failed to ‘remember their Grand Creator’ during their youth. Because of wasting his or her life, such a person ‘has no delight’ in later years. A godless life-style may also add to the problems and pains of old age. (Proverbs 5:3-11) Sadly, when looking ahead, such ones see no future but the grave.

Rejoicing in Old Age

This does not mean that elderly ones cannot enjoy life. In the Bible, “length of days and years of life” are also associated with God’s blessing. (Proverbs 3:1, 2) Jehovah told his friend Abraham: “As for you, . . . you will be buried at a good old age.”

(Genesis 15:15) Despite the discomforts of advanced years, Abraham found peace and serenity in his later years, looking back with satisfaction on a life devoted to Jehovah. He also looked forward in faith to a “city having real foundations,” God’s Kingdom. (Hebrews 11:10) Thus, he died “old and satisfied.”—Genesis 25:8.

Solomon therefore exhorted: “If a man should live even many years, in all of them let him rejoice.” (Ecclesiastes 11:8) Whether we are young or old, true joy is linked to our relationship with God.

As the young man in the workshop put away the last of his father’s tools, he thought about these things. He thought about all the people he knew who tried to make the best of their lives but who did not find happiness because they had no relationship with their Creator. How fitting it seemed that after giving encouragement to rejoice during one’s life, Solomon summarized matters with the words: “The conclusion of the matter, everything having been heard, is: Fear the true God and keep his commandments. For this is the whole obligation of man!”—Ecclesiastes 12:13.



JEHOVAH SHOULD BE OUR CONFIDENCE

"Jehovah himself will prove to be, in effect, your confidence."

—PROVERBS 3:26.

THE motto "In God We Trust" appears on money of the United States of America. But do all those using this currency, in that land or elsewhere, really place their trust in God? Or do they put more trust in the money itself? Such trust in money of that land or any other country cannot be reconciled with trust in an almighty God of love, who never misuses his power and who is in no way greedy. In fact, he condemns greed in unmistakable terms. —Ephesians 5:5.

² True Christians place their confidence in God, not in riches, with its "deceptive pow-

1. Though many claim to trust in God, what suggests that they do not always do so?
2. What attitude do true Christians have about the power of riches?

er." (Matthew 13:22) They recognize that the power of money to promote happiness and to preserve life is seriously limited. Not so the power of Almighty God. (Zephaniah 1:18) Therefore, how wise is the admonition: "Let your manner of life be free of the love of money, while you are content with the present things. For he has said: 'I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you'!" —Hebrews 13:5.

³ When writing the above words to Hebrew Christians, the apostle Paul quoted instructions that Moses gave to the Israelites shortly before his death: "Be courageous and strong. Do not be afraid or suf-

3. How does the context of Deuteronomy 31:6 shed light on Paul's quotation of the verse?

fer a shock before them, because Jehovah your God is the one marching with you. He will neither desert you nor leave you entirely." (Deuteronomy 31:6) The context shows that Moses was encouraging a confidence in Jehovah that went beyond simply trusting him to provide them with material needs. How so?

⁴ During the 40 years that Israel had to wander in the wilderness, God was faithful in providing them with life's necessities. (Deuteronomy 2:7; 29:5) He also provided leadership. One expression of this was a cloud by day and a fire by night, which led the Israelites to "a land flowing with milk and honey." (Exodus 3:8; 40:36-38) As the time arrived for actually entering the Promised Land, Jehovah chose Joshua to be Moses' successor. The occupants of the land could be expected to offer resistance. But Jehovah had marched with his people for decades, so there was no need to fear. The Israelites had every reason to know Jehovah as a God who could be trusted!

⁵ Christians today have been marching through the wilderness of the present wicked world on their way to God's new world. Some of them have been following this course for longer than 40 years. Now they are standing on the border of God's new world. Yet, enemies still stand in the way, intent upon hindering any from entering what will become like a Promised Land, more glorious than the ancient one that flowed with milk and honey. So for Christians today, how appropriate are Moses' words, as repeated by Paul: "I will by no means leave you nor by any means forsake you"! All who remain strong and courageous, full of faith,

putting confidence in Jehovah, are sure of a reward.

Confidence Based on Knowledge and Friendship

⁶ At one point the Israelites' forefather Abraham was commanded to sacrifice his son Isaac as a burnt offering. (Genesis 22:2) What enabled this loving father to have such unbreakable confidence in Jehovah that he was immediately willing to obey? Hebrews 11:17-19 answers: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, as good as offered up Isaac, and the man that had gladly received the promises attempted to offer up his only-begotten son, although it had been said to him: 'What will be called "your seed" will be through Isaac.' But he reckoned that God was able to raise him up even from the dead; and from there he did receive him also in an illustrative way."

⁷ Bear in mind that it took Abraham and Isaac three days to reach the site where the sacrifice was to occur. (Genesis 22:4) There was plenty of time for Abraham to reconsider what he had been asked to do. Can we imagine his feelings, his emotions? Isaac's birth had been such an unexpected cause for joy. That evidence of divine intervention deepened the attachment that Abraham and his formerly barren wife, Sarah, had to God. They certainly lived thereafter in expectation of what the future held for Isaac and for his descendants. Were their dreams coming to an abrupt end, as it might seem because of what God now asked?

⁸ Still, Abraham had confidence based on the personal knowledge that intimate friends have of one another. As "Jehovah's

4. How did God prove to the Israelites that he could be trusted?

5. How is the situation of Christians today similar to that of the Israelites before entering the Promised Land?

6, 7. (a) What put Abraham's confidence in Jehovah to the test? (b) How may Abraham have felt while journeying to the place where he was to sacrifice Isaac?

8. How did Abraham's confidence in God extend beyond believing that He could resurrect Isaac?

friend," Abraham "put faith in Jehovah, and it was counted to him as righteousness." (James 2:23) Abraham's confidence in Jehovah went further than just believing that God could resurrect Isaac. Abraham was equally convinced that what Jehovah was asking him to do was proper, even though Abraham did not have all the facts. He had no reason to question that Jehovah was righteous in making this request. Then, Abraham's confidence was strengthened as Jehovah's angel stepped in to prevent Isaac from actually being killed in sacrifice.—Genesis 22:9-14.

⁹ Abraham had displayed this same kind of confidence in Jehovah's righteousness some 25 years earlier. Warned that Sodom and Gomorrah were to be destroyed, he naturally was concerned about the welfare of any righteous people living there, including his nephew Lot. Abraham appealed to God with the words: "It is unthinkable of you that you are acting in this manner to put to death the righteous man with the wicked one so that it has to occur with the righteous man as it does with the wicked! It is unthinkable of you. Is the Judge of all the earth not going to do what is right?"—Genesis 18:25.

¹⁰ The patriarch Abraham was convinced that Jehovah never does anything unrighteous. The psalmist later sang: "Jehovah is righteous in all his ways and loyal in all his works." (Psalm 145:17) We do well to ask ourselves: 'Do I accept what Jehovah permits me to experience without doubting his righteousness? Am I convinced that whatever he permits will turn out for my good and for the good of others too?' If we can answer yes, we have learned an important lesson from Abraham.

9, 10. (a) When had Abraham earlier displayed confidence in Jehovah? (b) What important lesson can we learn from Abraham?

Displaying Confidence in Jehovah's Choices

¹¹ Those who view Jehovah as their confidence also show confidence in the men Jehovah chooses to use in the outworking of his purposes. For the Israelites, this meant showing confidence in Moses and later in his successor, Joshua. For early Christians, it meant showing confidence in the apostles and older men of the Jerusalem congregation. For us today, it means having confidence in "the faithful and discreet slave" appointed to give us our spiritual "food at the proper time," as well as in those from among them who form the Governing Body.—Matthew 24:45.

¹² Actually, placing our confidence in those taking the lead in the Christian congregation is for our own benefit. We are told: "Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will render an account; that they may do this with joy and not with sighing, for this would be damaging to you."—Hebrews 13:17.

Avoid Second-Guessing Jehovah's Choices

¹³ The Bible helps us to be balanced in showing confidence in those taking the lead among Jehovah's people. We might ask ourselves: 'Did Moses ever make mistakes? Did the apostles always show the Christlike attitude that Jesus wanted them to have?' The answers are obvious. Jehovah has chosen to use loyal and devoted men to guide his people, even though they are imperfect men. Accordingly, while elders today are imperfect, we still ought to recognize

11, 12. (a) What aspect of confidence has been necessary for God's servants? (b) What might be a problem for us at times?

13. What reason do we have for confidence in those appointed to take the lead?

them as “[appointed by] the holy spirit [to be] overseers, to shepherd the congregation of God.” They deserve our support and respect.—Acts 20:28.

¹⁴ Aaron was three years older than Moses, but both were younger than their sister, Miriam. (Exodus 2:3, 4; 7:7) And since Aaron was more fluent in speaking than was Moses, he was appointed to serve as his brother’s spokesman. (Exodus 6:29–7:2) Yet, to lead the Israelites, Jehovah did not choose the oldest, Miriam, or the most fluent, Aaron. His choice of Moses was made in full recognition of all the facts and the needs of the moment. When for a time they lacked this clear insight, Aaron and Miriam complained: “Is it just by Moses alone that Jehovah has spoken? Is it not by us also that he has spoken?” Miriam, possibly the prime instigator, was punished for this disrespectful attitude toward Jehovah’s choice, whom she and Aaron should have recognized as “the meekest of all the men who were upon the surface of the ground.”—Numbers 12:1–3, 9–15.

¹⁵ When 12 spies were sent to spy out the Promised Land, 10 brought back a negative report. They threw fear into the hearts of the Israelites by speaking about the Canaanite “men of extraordinary size.” This, in turn, caused the Israelites “to murmur against Moses and Aaron.” But not all the spies displayed lack of confidence in Moses and in Jehovah. We read: “Then Caleb tried to still the people toward Moses and went on to say: ‘Let us go up directly, and we are bound to take possession of it, because we can surely prevail over it.’” (Numbers 13:2, 25–33; 14:2) Caleb’s firm stand

14. What is noteworthy about Jehovah’s choosing Moses rather than Aaron or Miriam as leader?

15, 16. How did Caleb prove that he had confidence in Jehovah?



Confidence in Jehovah includes respecting those taking the lead in the congregation

was shared by his fellow spy Joshua. Both showed they had made Jehovah their confidence when they said: “If Jehovah has found delight in us, then he will certainly bring us into this land and give it to us, a land that is flowing with milk and honey. Only . . . do not you fear the people of the land . . . Jehovah is with us. Do not fear them.” (Numbers 14:6–9) This confidence in Jehovah was rewarded. Of the adult generation alive at that time, only Caleb, Joshua, and some Levites were privileged to enter the Promised Land.

¹⁶ Some years later Caleb said: “As for me, I followed Jehovah my God fully. . . . And now here Jehovah has preserved me alive, just as he promised, these forty-five years since Jehovah made this promise to Moses

when Israel walked in the wilderness, and now here I am today eighty-five years old. Yet I am today as strong as on the day of Moses' sending me out. As my power was then, so my power is now." (Joshua 14:6-11) Note Caleb's positive attitude, his faithfulness, and his physical abilities. Yet, Jehovah had not chosen Caleb to be Moses' successor. This privilege was extended to Joshua. We can be confident that Jehovah had reasons for his choice, and it was the best choice.

¹⁷ The apostle Peter denied his Master three times. He had also impetuously taken matters into his own hands, striking off the ear of the slave of the high priest. (Matthew 26:47-55, 69-75; John 18:10, 11) Some might say that Peter was a fearful, unbalanced person, unworthy of enjoying special privileges. Yet, who had been given the keys of the Kingdom, being privileged to open up the way to the heavenly calling to three groups? It was Peter.—Acts 2:1-41; 8:14-17; 10:1-48.

¹⁸ These examples show that we must be careful about judging by outward appearances. If we put our confidence in Jehovah, we will not doubt his choices. Although his earthly congregation is made up of imperfect humans, who have no claim to infallibility, he is using them in a mighty way.

17. What might seemingly have made Peter ineligible for responsibility?

18. What error, as mentioned by Jude, do we want to avoid?

How Would You Answer?

- ☐ What reasons did the Israelites have for trusting Jehovah?
- ☐ As regards confidence, what can be learned from Abraham?
- ☐ Why should we avoid second-guessing Jehovah's choices?

Jude, Jesus' half brother, warned first-century Christians of individuals "disregarding lordship and speaking abusively of glorious ones." (Jude 8-10) Never should we be like them.

¹⁹ Jehovah apparently chooses for certain responsibilities individuals who have the particular qualities necessary to guide his people in the way he wants them to go at that particular time. We ought to strive to recognize this fact, not second-guessing God's choices, but being content humbly to serve where Jehovah has placed us individually. Thus we show that we have made Jehovah our confidence.—Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 2:3.

Displaying Confidence in Jehovah's Righteousness

²⁰ If we at times tend to put too much confidence in ourselves and too little in Jehovah, let us learn from Moses. When 40 years old, he set out on his own to free the Israelites from Egyptian captivity. His efforts were doubtlessly well meant, but they did not result in Israel's immediate deliverance, nor in bettering his own situation. In fact, he was forced to flee. Only after undergoing 40 years of arduous training in a foreign land did he qualify to be selected to do what he had wanted to do earlier. This time he could be confident of Jehovah's backing because now things were being done Jehovah's way at a time that fitted His timetable.—Exodus 2:11-3:10.

²¹ Each of us might ask himself: 'Do I sometimes run ahead of Jehovah and the elders appointed in the congregation, trying to speed things up or do things my own way? Instead of feeling overlooked for certain privileges, do I readily accept my on—

19. Why do we have no reason to second-guess Jehovah's choices?

20, 21. What might we learn from God's way of dealing with Moses?

going period of training?' Basically, have we learned an important lesson from Moses?

²² Moreover, we can learn another lesson from Moses. Numbers 20:7-13 tells us of a mistake that he made, which cost him dearly. He lost the privilege of leading the Israelites into the Promised Land. Did he then respond that Jehovah's decision in the matter was unjust? Did he retreat into a corner, as it were, sulking because God was treating him so badly? Did Moses lose con-

22. Despite losing a great privilege, how did Moses feel about Jehovah?

fidence in Jehovah's righteousness? We can find the answers in words that Moses himself spoke to Israel shortly before his death. Of Jehovah, Moses said: "Perfect is his activity, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness, with whom there is no injustice; righteous and upright is he." (Deuteronomy 32:4) Moses certainly retained his confidence in Jehovah to the very end. What about us? Are we individually taking steps to strengthen our confidence in Jehovah and his righteousness? How can we do so? Let us see.

STRENGTHENING OUR CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S RIGHTEOUSNESS

*"For your confidence to come to be in Jehovah himself
I have given you knowledge."*—PROVERBS 22:19.

TRUE Christians are blessed with an accurate knowledge of Jehovah and of his purposes. A "faithful and discreet slave" lovingly supplies them with spiritual "food at the proper time." (Matthew 24:45) The knowledge they gain provides them with a solid foundation on which to base confidence in God. Thus, as a group, Jehovah's Witnesses display remarkable confidence in Jehovah and in his righteousness.

1, 2. (a) Why do Jehovah's Witnesses display confidence in Jehovah? (Proverbs 22:19)
(b) What indicates that some individuals need to strengthen their confidence in Jehovah?

² It appears, however, that as individuals some Witnesses may need to strengthen such confidence. The Society occasionally receives letters that express uncertainty about explanations given in its publications. These doubts may be a reaction to adjustments in understanding, or they may deal with matters that touch the inquirer, especially in an emotional way.—Compare John 6:60, 61.

³ Even true servants of Jehovah experience the truthfulness of Ecclesiastes 9:11:

3. What can happen even to faithful servants of Jehovah, and why?

Even in the face of personal loss, we can be confident that Jehovah is righteous

"I returned to see under the sun that the swift do not have the race, nor the mighty ones the battle, nor do the wise also have the food, nor do the understanding ones also have the riches, nor do even those having knowledge have the favor; because time and unforeseen occurrence befall them all." How might this prove true in an extended, or spiritual, sense? We may have known Christians who were swift about applying Bible counsel, mighty in defending the truth, wise in applying Bible principles, and zealous in the pursuit of accurate knowledge. Yet, because of "time and unforeseen occurrence," some may now see themselves limited as a result of an accident or advanced age. They may wonder whether they will enter into God's new world without ever having to suffer death.

⁴ When a Christian loses his marriage mate, the pain and sense of loss is severe. Together as a couple, they may have served Jehovah for years or even decades. The surviving mate knows that death severs the marriage bond.* (1 Corinthians 7:39) Now, lest his confidence be undermined, he must

* See *The Watchtower*, October 15, 1967, page 638; June 1, 1987, page 30.

4, 5. Why do Christians not have any reason to lose their confidence in Jehovah's righteousness?



keep his emotions under control.—Compare Mark 16:8.

⁵ How wise it is to view the death of a mate, parent, child, or close Christian friend as an opportunity to show confidence in Jehovah's righteousness! Even in the face of personal loss, we can be confident that Jehovah is not unrighteous. We can have confidence that everyone who gains everlasting life—whether through survival or by resurrection—will be happy. Of God, the psalmist says: "You are opening your hand and satisfying the desire of every living thing. Jehovah is righteous in all his ways and loyal in all his works. Jehovah is near to all those calling upon him, to all those who call upon him in trueness. The desire of those fearing him he will perform, and their cry for help he will hear, and he will save them."—Psalm 145:16-19.

Feelings of Having Suffered Needlessly

⁶ In the past, some Witnesses have suffered for refusing to share in an activity that their conscience now might permit. For example, this might have been their choice years ago as to certain types of civilian service. A brother might now feel that he could conscientiously perform such without overstepping his Christian neutrality regarding the present system of things.

⁷ Was it unrighteous on Jehovah's part to allow him to suffer for rejecting what he now might do without consequences? Most who have had that experience would not think so. Rather, they rejoice that they had the opportunity of demonstrating publicly and clearly that they were determined to be firm on the issue of universal sovereignty. (Compare Job 27:5.) What reason could anyone have to regret having followed his conscience in taking a firm stand for Jehovah? By loyally upholding Christian principles as they understood them or by responding to the proddings of conscience, they proved worthy of Jehovah's friendship. Certainly, it is wise to avoid a course that would disturb one's conscience or that would likely cause others to be stumbled. We can think in this regard of the example that the apostle Paul set.—1 Corinthians 8:12, 13; 10:31-33.

⁸ In order to please Jehovah, the Jews were required to obey the Ten Commandments and also a wide variety of about 600 additional laws. Later, under the Christian arrangement, obedience to these laws

as such was no longer a requirement for serving Jehovah, not even for fleshly Jews. The laws no longer binding included those dealing with circumcision, keeping the Sabbath, offering animal sacrifices, and observing certain dietary restrictions. (1 Corinthians 7:19; 10:25; Colossians 2:16, 17; Hebrews 10:1, 11-14) Jews—including the apostles—who became Christians were released from the obligation to keep laws that they were required to obey when they were under the Law covenant. Did they complain that God's arrangement was unrighteous in having formerly required of them things that were no longer necessary? No, they rejoiced in the broadened understanding of Jehovah's purposes.—Acts 16:4, 5.

⁹ In modern times, there have been some Witnesses who were very strict in their view of what they would or would not do. For that reason they suffered more than others. Later, increased knowledge helped them to expand their view of matters. But they have no reason to regret having earlier acted in harmony with their conscience, even when this possibly brought extra suffering. It truly is commendable that they demonstrated their willingness to suffer in faithfulness to Jehovah, to "do all things for the sake of the good news." Jehovah blesses that kind of godly devotion. (1 Corinthians 9:23; Hebrews 6:10) The apostle Peter wrote with insight: "If, when you are doing good and you suffer, you endure it, this is a thing agreeable with God."—1 Peter 2:20.

Learning From Jonah

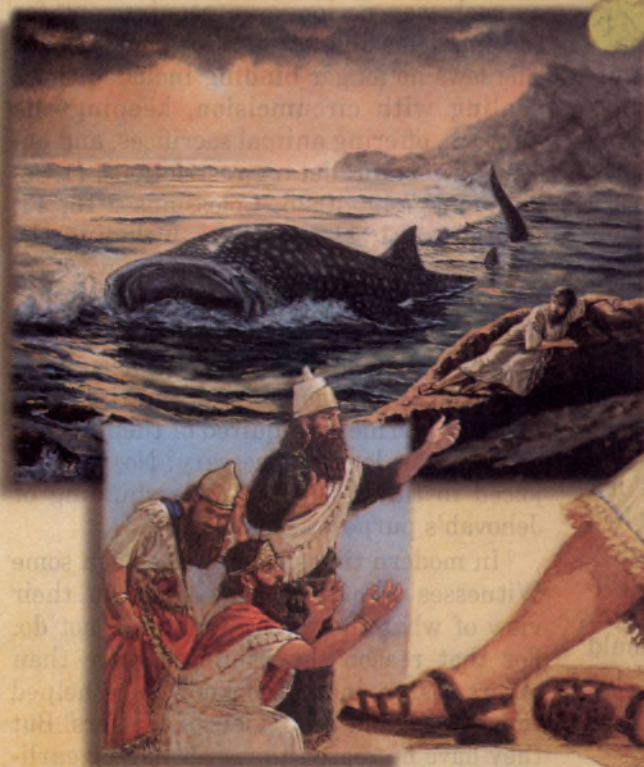
¹⁰ When directed to go to Nineveh, Jonah

6, 7. (a) Why might some Witnesses who suffered in the past now have a different understanding? (b) Why should we not view Jehovah as unrighteous for having permitted such suffering in the past?

8. Why did Jewish Christians, who formerly held to the Law, have no reason to question Jehovah's righteousness?

9. What has been true of some Witnesses, but why do they have no cause for regret?

10, 11. How did Jonah show a lack of confidence in Jehovah (a) when given the assignment to go to Nineveh? (b) when God did not destroy the Ninevites?



Are you sure that your confidence is in Jehovah?

showed a lack of appreciation for the confidence that Jehovah was placing in him. After a terrifying experience brought on by his own reluctance to obey, Jonah came to his senses, realized his mistake, accepted his foreign assignment, and warned the Ninevites of impending destruction. Then came the unexpected: Because of the Ninevites' repentant attitude, Jehovah determined to forgo their destruction.—Jonah 1:1-3:10.

¹¹ Jonah's reaction? Disgruntled, he complained to God in prayer. The gist of his grievance was: 'I imagined that things would turn out this way. That's why I didn't

want to come to Nineveh in the first place. Now, after all I've gone through, including the terror and humiliation of being swallowed by a big fish, and after my hard work warning the Ninevites of imminent destruction, this! All my work and suffering were for nothing! I might as well be dead!'—Jonah 4:1-3.

¹² Did Jonah have a valid reason for complaint? Was Jehovah unrighteous in extending mercy to repentant wrongdoers? Actually, Jonah should have rejoiced; tens of thousands of people were to be spared execution! (Jonah 4:11) But his disrespect—

12. What can we learn from Jonah's experience?

ful, complaining attitude showed that he was not expressing profound confidence in Jehovah's righteousness. He was thinking too much of himself and too little of others. Let us learn from Jonah by keeping ourselves and our personal feelings in the background. Let us be convinced that obeying Jehovah, following the direction given through his organization and accepting his decisions, is the right thing to do. We are convinced that "it will turn out well with those fearing the true God."—Ecclesiastes 8:12.

Now Is the Time to Strengthen Our Confidence!

¹³ Strengthening our confidence in Jehovah is the course of wisdom. (Proverbs 3:5-8) Of course, we must do more than just pray that Jehovah help us become more confident. Confidence grows based on accurate knowledge, so we must make personal Bible study, reading both the Bible and Bible-explanatory literature, part of our daily routine. Regular attendance at Christian meetings is vital, as are good preparation and participation to the extent possible. Making it a habit to share Bible truths with others, tactfully overcoming objections, also deepens our confidence in Jehovah and in his Word. We are thus becoming more involved with him on a daily basis.

¹⁴ In the near future, the greatest time of tribulation ever to strike the human race will break forth suddenly. (Matthew 24:21) When it does, servants of God will need as never before to display confidence in Jehovah's righteousness and in the direction provided by his organization. In a symbolic way, they will then confidently obey God's

13. How can all of us strengthen our confidence in Jehovah?

14. Why will God's people shortly be called upon to display their confidence in Jehovah as never before?

injunction: "Go, my people, enter into your interior rooms, and shut your doors behind you. Hide yourself for but a moment until the denunciation passes over." (Isaiah 26:20) Already they have entered into the protective atmosphere of over 85,000 congregations in 232 lands. Whatever may additionally be included in the injunction "enter into your interior rooms," we can be confident that Jehovah will help us to carry it out.

¹⁵ It is imperative that we strengthen our confidence now. Without confidence in our Christian brothers, in Jehovah's organization and, above all, in Jehovah himself, survival will be impossible. So how appropriate it is that during 1998, Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the world have repeatedly been reminded, by the words of their year-text, that "everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved"! (Romans 10:13) Of that we must continue to be confident. If we detect even the slightest tinge of uncertainty in this confidence, we should work to rectify it now, yes, today.

Jehovah's Judgment Will Be Righteous

¹⁶ At Hebrews 3:14, anointed Christians are warned: "We actually become partakers of the Christ only if we make fast our hold on the confidence we had at the beginning firm to the end." In principle, these words also apply to Christians who have an earthly hope. Initial confidence can erode if it is not developed. How vital that we continue pursuing accurate knowledge, thereby strengthening the foundation upon which our confidence is based!

15. How has the matter of confidence been stressed during 1998, and why rightly so?

16. What can happen to confidence if it is not cultivated, and how can we prevent this from happening?

¹⁷ All nations will shortly be examined by Christ so that he can “separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” (Matthew 25:31-33) We can be confident that Christ will be righteous in judging who is worthy of survival. Jehovah has given him the wisdom, insight, and other necessary qualities “to judge the inhabited earth in righteousness.” (Acts 17:30, 31) Let our conviction be like that of Abraham, who said: “It is unthinkable of you [Jehovah] that you are acting in this manner to put to death the righteous man with the wicked one so that it has to occur with the righteous man as it does with the wicked! It is unthinkable of you. Is the Judge of all the earth not going to do what is right?”—Genesis 18:25.

¹⁸ With complete confidence in Jehovah’s righteousness, we need not worry about finding answers to questions like: ‘How will babies and small children be judged? Might it be that a large number of people will not yet have been reached with the good news when Armageddon arrives? What about the mentally ill? What about . . . ?’ Granted, at present we may not know how Jehovah will resolve these issues. He will do so, however, in a righteous and merciful way. We should never doubt that. In fact, we may be amazed and delighted to observe him resolve them in a way that we never even considered.—Compare Job 42:3; Psalm 78:11-16; 136:4-9; Matthew 15:31; Luke 2:47.

¹⁹ Jehovah’s organization does not discourage sincere, timely questions, as some

17. Why can we be confident that as regards survival, Jesus will judge correctly?

18. Why should we not become overly concerned about what we may not know at present?

19, 20. (a) Why is it not wrong to ask reasonable questions? (b) When will Jehovah provide needed answers?

opposers mistakenly claim. (1 Peter 1:10-12) However, the Bible counsels that we avoid foolish, speculative questions. (Titus 3:9) Asking reasonable questions and searching God’s Word and Christian publications to find Scriptural answers can increase our accurate knowledge and can thus strengthen our confidence in Jehovah. The organization follows the example of Jesus. He refrained from commenting on questions for which the proper time for answering had not arrived. He explained: “I have many things yet to say to you, but you are not able to bear them at present.” (John 16:12) He also admitted that some things he himself did not know at that point.—Matthew 24:36.

²⁰ Jehovah still has much to reveal. How wise it is to wait upon him, confident that the timeliness of his manifesting his purposes will be right for meeting the needs of the occasion. We can be confident that once Jehovah’s due time has arrived, we will have the joy of gaining additional insight into his ways. Yes, we will be rewarded, provided that we exercise absolute confidence in Jehovah and in the organization he is using. Proverbs 14:26 assures us: “In the fear of Jehovah there is strong confidence, and for his sons there will come to be a refuge.”

What Do You Think?

- ☐ Why is it unwise to allow emotions to undermine our confidence in Jehovah?
- ☐ What can we learn from Jonah’s experience?
- ☐ Why are Bible study and meeting attendance so important?

Living and Preaching in the Shadow of a Volcano



"IT IS a frightening experience. It could very well be like the end of the world that the Bible speaks of. We must remain alert and be in good standing before Jehovah God every moment." Those are the words of Víctor, one of Jehovah's Witnesses, in relating his experience of living very near the Popocatepetl volcano, popularly called Popo, in Mexico.

This rumbling volcano has been in the international news since 1994.* The authorities concluded that everything within a 20-mile radius of the crater is in a high-risk zone.

* *Awake!* magazine of March 8, 1997, reported on this menacing volcano.

The south side of the volcano is especially dangerous because the crater is tilted in that direction and there are a number of deep ravines through which lava and mud could spill out from the crater.

Naturally, many wonder what would happen to Mexico City in case the volcano had a major eruption. Is that city at risk? Then there are also all those people in the state of Morelos to the south of the volcano. Are all in that area also in danger? And what is it like living in the shadow of the volcano, not knowing what might happen from day to day?

The Threat of the Volcano

Downtown Mexico City is about 45 miles northwest of Popocatepetl, although some suburbs are as close as 25 miles. Technically, the entire metropolitan area, with its population of 20 million, is outside the danger zone. However, depending on the direction of the wind, this area could be affected if a large quantity of ash is expelled by the volcano.

The effects of volcanic ash are usually more severe on the east side of the volcano. This area includes the city of Puebla and a number of smaller cities and towns, with about 200,000 living within the high-risk area. On Sunday, May 11, 1997, the volcano spewed tons of ash into the air and scattered it

all over this area, reaching as far as the state of Veracruz, more than 200 miles to the east. In the area south of the volcano, in the state of Morelos, there are several cities and towns with a total population of about 40,000 that could also be in serious danger.

In the midst of all of this, Jehovah's Witnesses live and work. In Mexico City, there are more than 90,000 of them in some 1,700 congregations. The Watch Tower Society's branch is located outside of Mexico City to the northeast, within about 60 miles of the volcano. There are more than 800 volunteers serving at the branch, besides some 500 volunteers who are working on a large construction project. All of them are outside the risk zone.

In the state of Morelos, there are about 50 congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses with more than 2,000 Kingdom publishers. Some of these, located in Tetela del Volcán and Hueyapan, are as close as 12 miles to the crater. In addition, to the east in the state of Puebla, there are congregations with about 600 publishers living within 15 to 20 miles from the volcano. These, of course, could be in serious danger.

Jehovah's Witnesses Remain Active

In spite of the constant threat, Jehovah's Witnesses have not stopped their preaching work in this area. They have also kept up their schedule of Christian meetings, which gives them a sense of unity and confidence under these adverse circumstances. (Hebrews 10:24, 25) A report from one of the congregations states: "There has been a remarkable change in the attitude of the people toward the Kingdom good news. In a small village, for instance, 18 people have recently accepted home Bible studies."

Another congregation, located 12 miles from the volcano, reports: "The growth has been outstanding. This congregation was es-

tablished in November 1996. During the following six months, 10 individuals became qualified to share in the field ministry. Some publishers live only ten miles from the crater. Christian meetings are being held there, and they have about 40 in attendance."

Magdalena, who lives in San Agustín Ixtahuixtla, Puebla, just 15 miles from the volcano, has kept very active conducting Bible studies. She relates what happened after one serious eruption.

"We were notified that we should leave our homes, which we did—under a rain of ash. In spite of the urgent situation, I thought of the Dorado family with whom I was studying the Bible. Some brothers and I went to the Dorados' house to help them move to a safer place. In the nearby city of Puebla, the relief committee of Jehovah's Witnesses had already set up operation. The Dorado family was very impressed with the way we all were treated there. We had accommodations in different places, prepared for us in advance by our Christian brothers. We lacked nothing, even though we were far from home. This family had attended some meetings at the Kingdom Hall, but they were surprised by the love shown them by brothers whom they had never met. Some weeks after returning to our homes, this family began to attend all the meetings regularly. Soon they qualified to be publishers of the good news. Two of them have now been baptized. They have served as auxiliary pioneer ministers for some months and are making plans to enter the regular pioneer service."

Martha, a 20-year-old girl who lives 13 miles from the crater, did not let a disability prevent her from taking advantage of every opportunity to preach. She learned the truth three years ago when the volcano once again became active. Instead of using



Martha (on donkey) and others witness in the shadow of Popocatepetl

a wheelchair, which would be hard to handle in the steep terrain where she lives, she rides a donkey to share in the preaching work. She also rides that donkey to the meetings. Martha is deeply grateful to Jehovah to be part of the loving brotherhood, since she depends on the help of the sisters in the congregation to get on and off the donkey. Every month, she spends over 15 hours in the ministry.

In these isolated areas, Jehovah's Witnesses often face pressure from their neighbors to join them in celebrating religious holidays. In Tulcingo, a village located about 12 miles from the volcano, a man was assigned to visit the Witnesses to collect donations for the celebrations. The brothers patiently explained why they could not par-

ticipate in those religious holidays. The man was so persistent in trying to get funds from the brothers that he began associating with them, getting to know some of their beliefs. He enjoyed finding the answers to his questions in his own Catholic Bible. Along with his wife and daughter, he has been attending the meetings regularly for a year and has expressed his desire to become a publisher of the good news.

How Can You Be Prepared?

Volcanologists conduct their studies and issue official reports about the menacing Popocatepetl, but no one really knows what will happen or when. According to the news media and the people living nearby, the

volcano may erupt at any time. The threat is real. Of course, the authorities are very concerned and want to do everything they can to be ready in case of an emergency. But it is understandable that they must be cautious about issuing a warning, since they do not want to trigger a mass exodus if there is no imminent danger. What, then, should one do?

“Shrewd is the one that has seen the calamity and proceeds to conceal himself, but the inexperienced have passed along and must suffer the penalty,” says a Bible proverb. (Proverbs 22:3) The wise course, therefore, is to take the necessary steps to ensure one’s safety while the door of opportunity is still open, not to ‘pass along’ as if nothing will ever happen, playing waiting games with such awesome natural forces. This is the way Jehovah’s Witnesses in the area view the matter.

Recently, representatives from the Watch Tower Society’s branch office met with traveling overseers in the state of Puebla, who are in close contact with the congregations in the danger zone. Plans were made for the traveling overseers and members of a relief committee to visit each one of the families living within 15 miles of the crater. These families were helped to consider moving

out of the danger zone before panic strikes. Transportation and accommodations were arranged in order to relocate 1,500 people to the city of Puebla. Some families moved to live with relatives in other cities.

Warning on a Larger Scale

The smoke, fire, and rumblings from Popocatepetl are clear indications that an eruption is close. All those who wish to escape must heed the warnings issued by the authorities and take appropriate action. Jehovah’s Witnesses in the immediate area of the volcano keep a constant vigil to ensure their own safety as well as to help others to see the danger and to do something about it before it is too late.

On a larger scale, Jehovah’s Witnesses are also alert to world events in the light of Bible prophecies. Wars, earthquakes, famines, diseases, and crime are just as significant as the activities of a volcano. They are elements of a composite sign that Jesus Christ foretold would mark “the conclusion of the system of things.” Though no one knows exactly when that end will come, there is no doubt that it is coming and that it is very, very close.—Matthew 24:3, 7-14, 32-39.

The urgent need today is for people everywhere to take very seriously Jesus’ warning: “Pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down with overeating and heavy drinking and anxieties of life, and suddenly that day be instantly upon you.” (Luke 21:34) This is clearly the wise course to take. Just as the warning signs of the volcano are not to be taken lightly, we must not ignore the approach of the Son of man, Jesus Christ, who urged: “On this account you too prove yourselves ready, because at an hour that you do not think to be it, the Son of man is coming.” —Matthew 24:44.

In Our Next Issue

Can You Trust Your Conscience?

Be Sure to Put First Things First!

“Hold On to What You Have”

"By the King and Queen, . . . We do hereby Declare, That all *French* Protestants that shall seek their Refuge in, and Transport themselves into this Our Kingdom, shall not only have Our Royal Protection . . . But We will also do Our Endeavour in all reasonable Ways and Means so to Support, Aid and Assist them . . . that their living and being in this Realm may be comfortable and easy to them."

THE HUGUENOTS' FLIGHT TO FREEDOM

THUS reads the 1689 declaration of William and Mary, the king and queen of England. But why did French Protestants, or Huguenots, as they came to be known, need to seek refuge and protection outside France? Why should their flight from France some 300 years ago interest us today?

Sixteenth-century Europe was racked by war and disputes involving religion. France, with its Wars of Religion (1562-1598) between Catholics and Protestants, did not escape this turmoil. In 1598, however, French King Henry IV signed an edict of tolerance, the Edict of Nantes, granting the Protestant Huguenots some religious freedom. This legal recognition of two religions was unique in Europe. For a time it put an end to the religious upheavals that had scarred 16th-century France for over 30 years.

Although intended to be "perpetual and

irrevocable," in 1685 the Edict of Nantes was revoked by the Edict of Fontainebleau. French philosopher Voltaire later described this revocation as "one of France's great

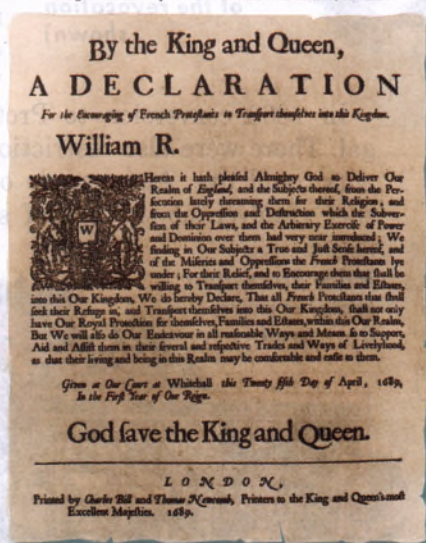
tragedies." In the short term, it provoked the flight of about 200,000 Huguenots to other countries. Its consequences, however, went even further. But why was that earlier edict in favor of religious tolerance revoked?

Opposed From the Beginning

Even though the Edict of Nantes officially applied for almost 90 years, one historian says that it was already "dying when it was assassinated in 1685." Indeed, the edict was not built on solid foundations. From the

start, it contributed to what has been described as a "cold war" between the Catholic clergy and what they termed the "R.P.R." (So-called Reformed Religion) From when it was issued in 1598 until

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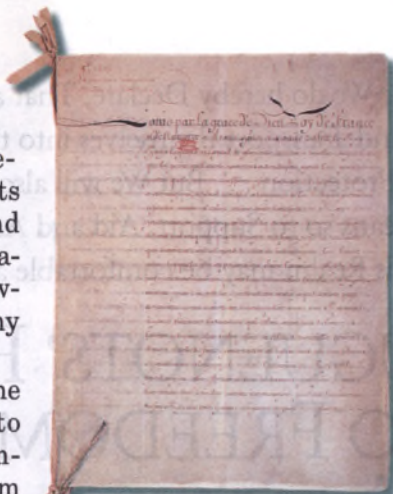
This 1689 declaration offered refuge to French Protestants seeking relief from religious oppression

about 1630, opposition to the Edict of Nantes revolved around public debates between Protestants and Catholics and around the publication of denominational literary works. However, intolerance had many faces.

After warring against the Protestants from 1621 to 1629, the French government tried to force them into the Catholic fold through a series of repressive measures. This harassment was intensified under Louis XIV, the "Sun King." His policy of persecution led to revoking the Edict of Nantes.

The Clampdown

As part of the clampdown, Protestant civil rights were progressively removed. Between 1657 and 1685, about 300 rulings, often suggested by the clergy, were made against the Huguenots. Those rulings attacked every aspect of their lives. For instance, a vast array of professions, such as medicine, law, and even midwifery, were forbidden to Huguenots. As to midwifery, one historian reasoned: "How was it possible to trust one's life to a heretic whose goal was to destroy the existing order?"



Documents conservés au Centre Historique des Archives nationales à Paris

Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, 1685 (First page of the revocation shown)

The grip of oppression was further tightened in 1677. Any Huguenot who was caught trying to convert a Catholic was to be fined a thousand French pounds. State funds from exorbitant taxes were used to influence the Huguenots to convert. In 1675 the Catholic clergy gave 4.5 million French pounds to King Louis XIV, saying: "Now you must follow through on your show of gratitude by using your authority to wipe out the heresy completely." This strategy of "buying" converts resulted in about 10,000 conversions to Catholicism within three years.

In 1663 conversion to Protestantism was made illegal. There were also restrictions as to where the Huguenots could live. An example of the extreme measures is that children at the age of seven could become Catho-

Many Protestant temples were destroyed

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lics against their parents' wishes. Protestant parents were obliged to finance the education their children received from Jesuits or other Catholic instructors.

Another weapon in suppressing the Huguenots was the secretive *Compagnie du Saint-Sacrement* (Company of the Holy Sacrament). This was a Catholic organization that historian Janine Garrisson says amounted to a "vast network" covering the whole of France. Penetrating the highest spheres of society, it lacked neither finances nor intelligence information. Garrisson explains that its tactics were many: "From pressure to obstruction, manipulation to denunciation, the *Compagnie* used every means to weaken the Protestant community." Nevertheless, most Huguenots stayed in France during this period of persecution. Historian Garrisson notes: "It is hard to understand why the Protestants did not leave the Kingdom in greater numbers as the hostility toward them gradually increased." However, flight to freedom eventually became a necessity.

Back to Square One

The Peace of Nymegen (1678) and the Truce of Ratisbon (1684) freed King Louis XIV from external war. Across the Channel in England, a Catholic became king in February 1685. Louis XIV could take advantage of this new situation. A few years before, the Catholic clergy in France had issued the Four Gallican Articles, which restricted papal power. Pope Innocent XI then "viewed the French Church as almost schismatic." Consequently, by revoking the Edict of Nantes, Louis XIV could enhance his tarnished reputation and restore normal relations with the pope.

The king's policy toward the Protestants became blatantly clear. The soft method (persuasion and legislation) evidently had not worked. On the other hand, the recent

dragonnades* were successful. So in 1685, Louis XIV signed the Edict of Fontainebleau, revoking the Edict of Nantes. The violent persecution associated with this revocation left the Huguenots in an even worse position than before the Edict of Nantes. What would they do now?

Hide, Fight, or Flee?

Some Huguenots chose to worship secretly. With their meeting places destroyed and their public worship banned, they turned to the 'Church of the Desert,' or underground worship. This was despite the fact that people who held such meetings risked being sentenced to death, according to a law passed in July 1686. Some Huguenots abjured their faith, thinking it would be possible to convert back later. Such converts practiced a superficial Catholicism that would be copied by later generations.

The government tried to consolidate conversions. To get jobs, new converts had to produce a certificate of their Catholicity signed by the parish priest, who noted attendance at church. If children were not baptized and raised as Catholics, they could be taken away from their parents. Schools were to promote Catholic education. Efforts were made to produce pro-Catholic religious works for the "people of the Book [the Bible]," as Protestants were called. The government printed over one million books and sent them to areas where large numbers had converted. The measures were so extreme that if someone who was ill refused Catholic last rites and he thereafter recovered, he was condemned to prison or the galleys for life. And when he later died, his body was merely dumped as if it were garbage, and his belongings were confiscated.

Some Huguenots turned to armed resistance. In the Cévennes region, noted for its

* See the box on page 28.

The Dragonnades

Conversion by Terror

Some viewed the dragoons as "excellent missionaries." Among the Huguenots, however, they aroused panic, and in some cases whole villages would convert to Catholicism upon hearing of their arrival. But who were these dragoons?

Dragoons were heavily armed soldiers billeted in houses of Huguenots with a view to intimidating the occupants. The use of dragoons in this way was known as the dragonnades. To increase the burden placed on families, the number of soldiers sent to a house was disproportionate to the family's resources. The dragoons were authorized to brutalize families, make them suffer loss of sleep, and destroy possessions. If the occupants would abjure the Protestant faith, the dragoons would leave.

The dragonnades were used to obtain conversions in 1681 in Poitou, West France, an area with a high Huguenot concentration. Within a few months, from 30,000 to 35,000 converted. The same means was used in 1685 in other Huguenot enclaves. Within a few months, from 300,000 to 400,000 abjurations were obtained. According to historian Jean Quénart, the dragonnades' success "made the Revocation [of the tolerant Edict of Nantes] inevitable, because now it seemed possible."

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religious fervor, militant Huguenots called Camisards revolted in 1702. Responding to the Camisards' ambushes and nighttime attacks, government troops burned villages. Although sporadic Huguenot attacks continued for some time, by 1710 the might of King Louis' army had crushed the Camisards.

Another response of the Huguenots was to flee France. This emigration has been called a veritable diaspora. Most Huguenots were destitute when they left because

the state had confiscated their possessions, the Catholic Church receiving part of the wealth. So it was not easy to flee. The French government reacted swiftly to what was happening, watching exit routes and searching ships. Pirates plundered ships leaving France, for there were bounties for capture of escapees. Huguenots who were found fleeing faced severe punishment. Making things harder, spies working within the communities tried to find out the names of those planning to flee and their

routes. Intercepted letters, forgeries, and intrigues became the order of the day.

A Welcome Refuge

The Huguenots' flight from France and their welcome in host countries was known as the Refuge. Huguenots fled to Holland, Switzerland, Germany, and England. Later some went to Scandinavia, America, Ireland, the West Indies, South Africa, and Russia.

A number of European countries passed edicts encouraging the Huguenots to immigrate. Among the incentives offered were free naturalization, exemption from taxes, and free membership in a trade guild. According to historian Elisabeth Labrousse, the Huguenots were mostly "young males . . . enterprising, energetic subjects of exceptional moral worth." Thus France, at the height of her power, lost skilled workers in a number of trades. Yes, "possessions, fortunes and techniques" went abroad. Religious and political factors also played a part in offering refuge to the Huguenots. But what were the long-term consequences of this emigration?

The revocation of the Edict of Nantes and attendant persecution provoked negative international reaction. William of Orange was able to capitalize on the anti-French sentiment to become ruler of the Netherlands. With the help of Huguenot officers, he also became king of Great Britain, replacing Catholic James II. Historian Philippe Joutard explains that "Louis XIV's Protestant policy was one of the principal causes of the overthrow of James II [and] the formation of the Augsburg league. . . . [These] events mark a turning point in the history of Europe, leading to the replacement of French hegemony with English hegemony."

The Huguenots played an important cul-

tural role in Europe. They used their newfound freedom to produce literature that helped to shape the philosophy of the Enlightenment and ideas of tolerance. For example, a French Protestant translated the works of English philosopher John Locke, propagating the idea of natural rights. Other Protestant writers emphasized the importance of freedom of conscience. The idea developed that obedience to rulers is relative and could be ignored if they broke the contract that existed between them and the people. Thus, as historian Charles Read explains, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes was "one of the obvious factors of the French Revolution."

Lessons Learned?

Given the counterproductive consequences of persecution and the loss to the state of so many valuable people, the Marquis de Vauban, military adviser to King Louis XIV, urged the king to restore the Edict of Nantes, stating: "The conversion of hearts belongs only to God." So why did the French State not learn its lesson and reverse its decision? Certainly one contributing factor was that the king feared weakening the state. Furthermore, it was expedient to pander to the Catholic revival and religious intolerance of 17th-century France.

Events surrounding the revocation have caused some to ask, "How much pluralism can a society allow and tolerate?" Indeed, as historians have noted, it is not possible to consider the Huguenots' story without thinking about "the mechanisms of power and their perversions." In societies today that are increasingly multiracial and religiously diverse, the Huguenots' flight to freedom is a poignant reminder of what happens when church-inspired politics take primacy over the best interests of the people.

DO YOU REMEMBER?

Have you given careful thought to recent issues of *The Watchtower*? If so, you will find it interesting to recall the following:

□ **Why is the doctrine of predestination unreasonable?** If God foreknew and decreed Adam's fall into sin, then Jehovah became the author of sin when he made man and he would be responsible for all human wickedness and suffering. This cannot be reconciled with the fact that Jehovah is a God of love who hates wickedness. (Psalm 33:5; Proverbs 15:9; 1 John 4:8)—4/15, pages 7, 8.

□ **In fulfillment of Isaiah 2:2-4, what are people from many nations doing?** As they stream to Jehovah's house of worship, they also refrain from 'learning war' because they have placed their confidence in the protection of God's heavenly armies, which are poised to destroy all enemies of peace.—4/15, page 30.

□ **Who are God's powerful ones spoken of at Joel 3:10, 11?** Some 280 times in the Bible, the true God is called "Jehovah of armies." (2 Kings 3:14) These armies are the powerful angelic hosts of heaven, ready to do Jehovah's bidding.—5/1, page 23.

□ **What lesson can we learn from Jehovah's requiring Job to pray for those who transgressed against him?** (Job 42:8) Before Job was restored to a healthy state, Jehovah required that he pray in behalf of those who had transgressed against him. This shows that Jehovah requires that we forgive those who sin against us before we can have our sins forgiven. (Matthew 6:12; Ephesians 4:32)—5/1, page 31.

□ **What did James mean when he said: "Let endurance have its work complete"?** (James 1:4) Endurance has a job to do, a "work." Its assignment is to make us complete in all respects. Hence, by letting trials run their course without using unscriptural means to bring them to a swift end, our faith is tested and refined.—5/15, page 16.

□ **Why has God waited so long to solve mankind's problems?** Jehovah's view of time is different from ours. To the eternal God, the period from Adam's creation until now does not even amount to a week. (2 Peter 3:8) But whatever view of time we have, each day that passes brings us nearer to Jehovah's day of vindication.—6/1, pages 5, 6.

□ **What motivates Jehovah's Witnesses?** Jehovah's teaching has produced a unique people, educated to love one another and their neighbor as themselves. (Isaiah

54:13) Love is what motivates Jehovah's Witnesses to continue preaching in spite of public apathy and opposition. (Matthew 22:36-40; 1 Corinthians 13:1-8)—6/15, page 20.

□ **What is implied by Jesus' words: "Exert yourselves vigorously to get in through the narrow door"?** (Luke 13:24) Jesus' words imply struggling, extending ourselves. His words also indicate that some might seek to 'get through the door' only at their own convenience, at an easy pace that they prefer. So each one of us can ask, 'Am I applying myself with diligence and industriousness?'—6/15, page 31.

□ **How will resurrected ones be "judged out of those things written in the scrolls according to their deeds"?** (Revelation 20:12) These scrolls are not the record of their past deeds; when they died they were acquitted of the sins they committed during their lifetime. (Romans 6:7, 23) However, resurrected humans will still be under Adamic sin. It must be, then, that these scrolls will set forth divine instructions that all must follow in order to benefit fully from the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.—7/1, page 22.

□ **What lessons are contained for us in Jesus' parable about the neighborly Samaritan?** (Luke 10:30-37) Jesus' parable shows that a truly upright person is one who not only obeys God's laws but also imitates his qualities. (Ephesians 5:1) It also shows that neighborliness should transcend all national, cultural, and religious barriers. (Galatians 6:10)—7/1, page 31.

□ **What are three areas in which you might get to know your children and provide parental guidance?** (1) Help your children to choose an appropriate type of secular work; (2) prepare them to cope with emotional stress in school and at the workplace; (3) show them how to satisfy their spiritual needs.—7/15, page 4.

□ **For what purpose did God rest on "the seventh day"?** (Genesis 2:1-3) God did not rest because of being tired. Rather, he desisted from earthly work in order to let his handiwork develop and come into full glory, to his praise and honor.—7/15, page 18.

□ **What are three ways in which we can exercise justice?** First, we must conform to God's moral standards. (Isaiah 1:17) Second, we exercise justice when we treat others the way we want Jehovah to treat us. (Psalm 130:3, 4) Third, we display godly justice when we diligently engage in the preaching activity. (Proverbs 3:27)—8/1, pages 14, 15.

A Work That "Cannot Fail to Arouse Respect"

THE apostle Peter admonished his fellow Christians: "Maintain your conduct fine among the nations, that, in the thing in which they are speaking against you as evildoers, they may as a result of your fine works of which they are eye-witnesses glorify God." (1 Peter 2:12) For many years Jehovah's Witnesses in Italy have publicly displayed such fine conduct. In the spirit of Jesus' instruction to "preach from the housetops," they perform all their Christian activity openly, in full public view. (Matthew 10:27; John 18:20) Consequently, when an Italian attorney and a priest published accusations that Jehovah's Witnesses are "a pseudoreligious sect" and counted them in with "secret societies that entrap people," the Witnesses decided to take legal action because of the defamatory statements.

In the first trial, the court concluded that the attorney and the priest had broken no law. However, on July 17, 1997, the Venice Court of Appeals overruled the first court's decision, finding both defendants guilty. The Court of Appeals stated: "Both of the published articles in question contain expressions and phrases that are certainly capable of damaging the reputation of the followers of the religion of 'Jehovah's Witnesses.' It seems evident that the intention of the articles is to expose its followers to public contempt." The court stated that the articles "do not constitute legitimate exercise of the right of reporting and criticism." The court fined the two defamers and also ordered them to pay all court costs, including all the Witnesses' legal expenses for both cases.

In its written judgment, the Venice Court of Appeals commented: "Only by balancing and safeguarding all the rights guaranteed by the [Italian] Constitution is it possible to prevent forms of intolerance and religious fanaticism." The decision acknowledges that the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses is neither secret nor pseudoreligious. "To classify the Witnesses among secret societies,"



noted the court, "does not even respect the criterion of historic truth, since the professed religion is present in many cities and the widespread proselytizing activity that is carried out by its members, particularly on Sundays and other holidays, is well-known and cannot fail to arouse respect for the efforts made, whatever one might think of the doctrine preached." Thus, the record of zealous preaching and exemplary conduct of Jehovah's Witnesses in Italy has helped to dissipate prejudice against them.—Matthew 5:14-16; 1 Peter 2:15.

“Who Gave Birth to the Dewdrops?”



A 19TH-CENTURY journalist described dewdrops as “earth’s liquid jewelry, wrought of the air.” Our Creator asked the ancient patriarch Job: “Who gave birth to the dewdrops?” (Job 38:28) God was reminding Job of the divine origin of the precious dew.

Apart from its glistening, jewellike beauty, dew is associated in the Bible with blessing, fertility, abundance, and the preservation of life. (Genesis 27:28; Deuteronomy 33:13, 28; Zechariah 8:12) During Israel’s hot, rainless season, “the dew of Hermon” preserved the land’s vegetation, and therefore its people. Mount Hermon’s forested and snowy heights still produce night vapors that condense to form abundant dew. The psalmist David compared the refreshment brought by this dew to the pleasant experience of dwelling in unity with fellow worshipers of Jehovah.—Psalm 133:3.

The prophet Moses’ instructions to Israel were gentle and refreshing, like dewdrops. He said: “My saying will trickle as the dew, as gentle rains upon grass and as copious showers upon vegetation.” (Deuteronomy 32:2) Today, Jehovah’s Witnesses are declaring the life-giving good news about God’s Kingdom to the ends of the earth. (Matthew 24:14) God is extending the invitation: “‘Come!’ And let anyone thirsting come; let anyone that wishes take life’s water free.” (Revelation 22:17) Millions of people of all nations are accepting this offer of spiritual refreshment from God, which can sustain life eternally.