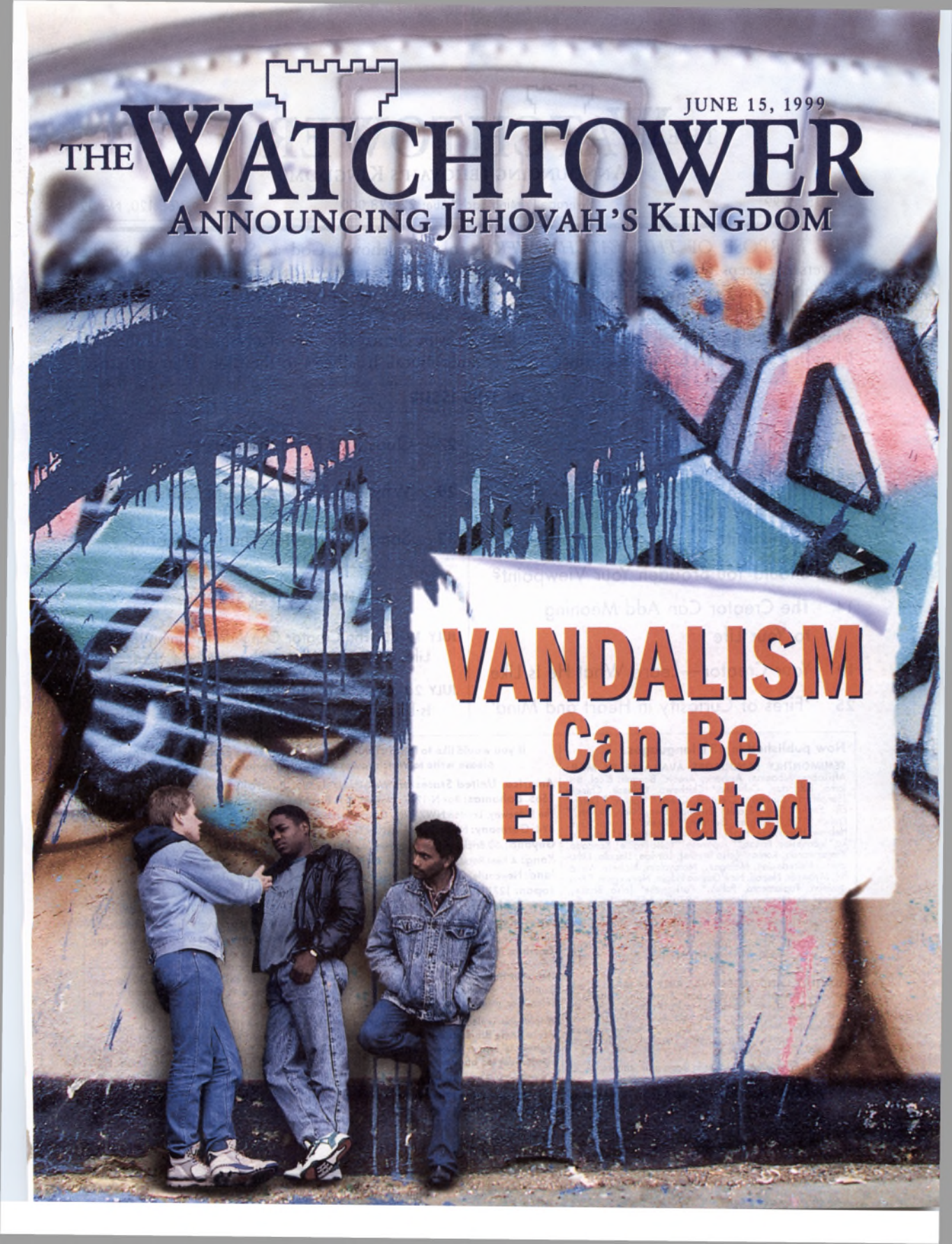




JUNE 15, 1999

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

VANDALISM
Can Be
Eliminated

THE WATCHTOWER[®]

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

June 15, 1999

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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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VANDALISM

Why?

trains or buses, is often a target. Seemingly, vandals do not care about anything. But what is behind much of the vandalism that we see or suffer from?

Marco,* a youth from Rio de Janeiro, became frustrated after his team lost a soccer game—so frustrated that he began throwing stones at a bus loaded with fans of the winning team. Or consider Claus. When he did not do well in school, he became so enraged that he hurled stones and broke windows. However, the “fun” evaporated when his father was asked to pay for the damage. Another youth, Erwin, was studying in school and working. He and his peers were seen as nice youths. Yet, their pastime was to vandalize the neighborhood. Erwin’s parents knew nothing

about that. Valter was an orphan who had little choice but to make the streets of São Paulo his home. His best friends were a gang of vandals, and he went along with them and also learned martial arts. Such examples show that there are faces behind vandalism, and the trigger for, or emotions involved in, vandalism vary.

“Vandalism may be an act of revenge or a way of expressing a political opinion. Both young people and adults sometimes commit the crime just for ‘fun,’” says *The World Book Encyclopedia*. However, rather than being just youthful fun, vandalism can be seriously destructive, even deadly. A group

— * Names have been changed.

“I HAVE nothing to say.” These words were written in huge letters on a newly painted wall in a pleasant neighborhood of São Paulo. An act of vandalism, you might think. And graffiti is just one kind of vandalism.

Imagine that irresponsible vandals have damaged your new car. Or you may note that public property—useful to many—has been damaged or destroyed by vandals. Why? Yes, why? Have you ever wondered why acts of vandalism abound? In many places, vandals seem to find delight in defacing or ruining telephone booths. Public transport, such as

of youths wanted to "have some fun," and when they saw a man asleep, they doused him with a flammable liquid and set him on fire. The victim, an Indian, later died in the hospital. According to a report, "the young men allegedly said they did not think anyone would care as several beggars had been burned on the street, and no action had been taken." Whether vandalism seems victimless or not, the cost, financial and emotional, is incalculable. So, what can control or end vandalism?

Who Can Stop Vandalism?

Can the police and the schools prevent vandalism? One problem is that the authorities may be occupied with more serious crimes, such as drug trafficking or murder cases, rather than with "victimless" offenses. According to one police officer, when

a youth gets in trouble, the parents often "blame the kids he hangs out with, or the school, or the police for catching him." Education and law enforcement may reduce vandalism; yet, what if parental attitudes do not change? One juvenile-probation officer says: "It's boredom and opportunity. [The children are] out late, and they have nothing to do. And they're probably not supervised—otherwise they wouldn't be out."

Although vandalism is a serious problem in many places, consider how things might be reversed. The young vandals mentioned in the beginning changed; now they completely avoid antisocial behavior. What made these former delinquents change their life-style? Also, would you be surprised if vandalism were to be not only reduced but eliminated? We invite you to read the next article.

VANDALISM Can Be Eliminated

"TEENAGE vandalism has always been considered an expression of disrespect for and hostility toward adults and their standards," explain authors Jane Norman and Myron W. Harris. While many youths believe that nothing can be done to change the situation, "one out of 3 thinks that teenage vandalism could be curbed if parents paid more attention to their children, and if teenagers weren't so bored," the authors reported. While keeping young people occupied and giving them better parental control may reduce vandal-

ism, would that in itself get at the root causes?

When alone, many young people are not troublemakers, yet in a group or in pairs, they may try to get attention, doing foolish and nasty things. That was the case with Nelson, who under the influence of drugs or alcohol often expressed his anger and discontent by acts of vandalism. José, stirred up by sermons in the Catholic Church about land reform and labor rights, felt that he should take part in strikes and organized vandalism as a means of protest. However,

both Nelson and José found something far better than riots or vandalism.

Some Deeper Causes of Vandalism

Let us examine more closely why some youngsters engage in vandalism. Many adolescents are confused and “describe the world as a mixed-up, crazy place, filled with crazy people.” Nonetheless, and contrary to what some believe, one report said: “Teenagers do worry about the direction of their lives. They care more than adults think they do.” Unwittingly or not, a youth involved in vandalism may in this way be expressing his deep-seated frustrations, unresolved problems, or unfulfilled needs. According to the study mentioned at the outset, “not one of [the] respondents defended or justified vandalism, not even those who [had] engaged in it.”

A youth may seldom hear a word of appreciation or encouragement. Since education is increasingly important and more jobs require a high degree of specialized knowledge or technical skill, he or she may feel intimidated. Moreover, parents, teachers, or peers may be very critical and demanding, putting the emphasis on what the youth achieves and not on what he or she is as a person. Many rebel or vandalize simply because they are disappointed with themselves. Would not the love and attention of parents greatly reduce such distress?

You may have seen that while certain authorities have seemingly given up on trying to control graffiti and other kinds of delinquency, concerned citizens in general still look to teachers and school personnel to control vandalism. Regarding law enforcement, *The World Book Encyclopedia* says: “Vandalism is punishable by fine or imprisonment. Some local governments have laws that hold parents responsible for vandalism committed by their children. But most acts of vandalism are not punished. Law enforcement is difficult in such cases, and the

cost of most individual acts of damage is not large enough to make legal action worthwhile.” One report showed that only 3 percent of offenders were ever caught.

You likely will agree that adequate parenting may be the best way to attack a root cause of delinquency. But when family life deteriorates, communities suffer. Professor Ana Luisa Vieira de Mattos, of São Paulo University, Brazil, notes that some of the reasons for problems with young people are “weak parental supervision, lack of rules, lack of communication, neglect, indifference or apathy.”

In our time we certainly have seen a fulfillment of Jesus’ words: “Because of the increasing of lawlessness the love of the greater number will cool off.” (Matthew 24: 12) And who will deny that the words recorded at 2 Timothy 3:1-4 are proving true? The apostle Paul wrote: “Know this, that 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.” The fact is, just living among people with such characteristics contributes to delinquency. We need not give up though. Communities in general have failed to eliminate vandalism, but we can find people who have succeeded in changing their own life-style, no longer being ill-mannered or reckless. In their cases vandalism has been stopped.

Sound Guidance for Young People

What has helped vandals and others to change their personality? Although it may seem incredible to some educators and parents, the Bible provides excellent and

up-to-date guidance. By following it, former vandals have been moved to obey God's specific law: "You must not follow after the crowd for evil ends." (Exodus 23:2) Many have been attracted to the truth from God's Word about beliefs and doctrines that they never before understood, and what they have learned has affected them for the better. Consider the experience of José, a youth in São Paulo. He was raised believing in the use of images in worship. When he learned that God has a name, Jehovah, and that He does not approve of image worship, José made changes so as to do what is pleasing in God's eyes.—Exodus 20:4, 5; Psalm 83:18; 1 John 5:21; Revelation 4:11.

Nelson, rather than having one frustrating experience after another in violent gangs and strikes, found a real hope for the future, and that has given him enormous relief. He says: "Instead of being rejected by my family because of bad company and a life as a drug addict, now I am the one who is most respected at home. Often my father asks me to counsel my older brothers. Since I began to study the Bible with Jehovah's Witnesses, I have known joy because I now have a purpose in life." And for an urban youth like Marco—accustomed to living in a violent environment—getting to know that God's Kingdom will make the earth a paradise has indeed been heartwarming.—Revelation 21:3, 4.

Consider also the case of a former gang member, street brawler, and vandal. Being an orphan with a very sad childhood, Valter was impressed that in the midst of a corrupt, wicked system, God has a people. They sincerely endeavor to apply Bible principles in their lives, showing compassion, consideration, and kindness. Valter explains: "True to Jesus' promise, I now have an enormous family, 'brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers.' Regarding the future, I look forward to the time when people will live in

happiness and unity under God's righteous government."—Mark 10:29, 30; Psalm 37:10, 11, 29.

Something Better Than Protest

In addition to showing consideration and love for their fellowmen, these former vandals have learned to "hate what is bad." (Psalm 97:10; Matthew 7:12) What about you? Even if you are just one who suffers from the effects of widespread vandalism, a study of God's Word will make Jehovah real to you as a loving heavenly Father who wants to care for you. (1 Peter 5:6, 7) God can help you to grow spiritually, despite personal weaknesses or poverty. That in itself is a marvelous experience!

Jehovah and his Son, Jesus Christ, truly want all kinds of people to have the opportunity to learn Bible truth. God's Word can do more than help individuals to stop being vandals right now. It can motivate them to make further progress in applying divine principles. As a result, they become members of an international brotherhood known for cleanness and good manners, the worldwide congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. In harmony with Ephesians 4:24, these sincere Christians have "put on the new personality which was created according to God's will in true righteousness and loyalty." Soon the world will be filled with such people because these will be the only ones who will survive and live forever.—Compare Luke 23:43.

A New World Free From Vandalism Is Possible

Do you believe that vandalism really can be eradicated? If so, how will such a momentous change come about? God's Kingdom will soon eliminate this wicked system. Those inhabiting the earth will be held responsible for any deliberate breaking of God's righteous laws. (Compare Isaiah 24:5, 6.) While "transgressors themselves will



Parental attention and love protect young people

certainly be annihilated together," those who love righteousness will be delivered. "Jehovah will help them and provide them with escape. He will provide them with escape from wicked people and save them, because they have taken refuge in him." —Psalm 37:38-40.

Really, the roots of vandalism will be eliminated completely. And so will all crime, oppression, suffering, and wickedness. Instead, peace, true righteousness, quietness, and security will characterize life in the new world. Isaiah 32:18 describes what will prove true in a literal way: "My people must dwell in a peaceful abiding place and in residences of

full confidence and in undisturbed resting-places." Yes, a beautiful, global paradise will be inhabited by people who show love and consideration toward others.

Together with millions of others, former vandals already enjoy an intimate relationship with Jehovah God. They no longer have any share in acts of vandalism. Will you too allow God's Word to guide you to life in his new world? Why not imitate the ancient psalmist who recorded Jehovah's declaration: "I shall make you have insight and instruct you in the way you should go. I will give advice with my eye upon you." —Psalm 32:8.

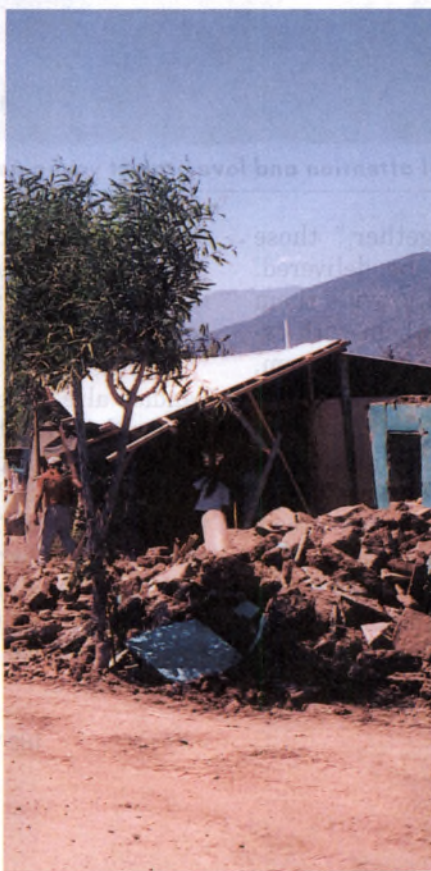
Love Toward Those 'Related in the Faith'

GENUINE Christians have a family-like bond among themselves. Indeed, since the first century C.E., they have referred to one another as “brother” and “sister.” (Mark 3:31-35; Philemon 1, 2) These are not just words; they constitute a description of how worshipers of God feel about one another. (Compare 1 John 4: 7, 8.) Jesus said: “By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love among yourselves.”—John 13:35.

Such love was evident in July 1997 when a prolonged drought was followed by torrential rains and flooding in Chile. Suddenly, many were in need of food, clothing, and other items. In disaster situations, Je-

hovah's Witnesses strive to follow Paul's admonition to the Galatians: “Really, then, as long as we have time favorable for it, let us work what is good toward all, but especially toward those related to us in the faith.” —Galatians 6:10.

Hence, Jehovah's Witnesses quickly organized themselves to respond. Food, clothing, and the like were collected, sorted, packed, and then shipped to the disaster area. Children even donated toys! One sister was amazed when she saw the Kingdom Hall filled with relief supplies. “I stood dumbfounded, not knowing whether to laugh or to cry,” she says. “It was just what we needed.”



Then, unexpectedly, an earthquake struck a portion of the same area affected by the flooding. Many homes were demolished. To meet the need, more relief committees were formed. Regional Building Committees, which normally handle the construction of Jehovah's Witnesses' meeting facilities, pitched in and gave their support. The result? Modest houses—designed and built by the brothers—were donated to those who lost their homes. While these homes were not elaborate, they stood in stark contrast with the ones provided on a loan basis by secular relief efforts and which were without floors and windows and were unpainted.

Some brothers traveled long distances to help out. The chairman of one Regional Building Committee made an extensive tour on two consecutive days—despite being confined to a wheelchair. A blind brother worked arduously, carrying beams to the carpenter who cut them to the desired size.

A deaf brother collected the beams and delivered them to where they were needed.

Many observers were impressed with the assistance provided by the brothers. In one town a police vehicle was parked near a sister's house that was being repaired. The policemen were curious. One asked a brother: "Who are these workers who seem to be so happy, and how much are they getting paid?" The brother explained that they were all volunteers. One of the officers explained that he paid a monthly tithe to his church, yet his pastor had not even visited him since the earthquake! The next day the sister received a phone call from a police official. He too had observed the workers. He said that he was so impressed by the enthusiastic spirit of the workers that he was tempted to join in!

Truly, the relief effort in Chile was a joyful experience for the volunteers and an excellent witness to observers.





Should You Broaden Your Viewpoint?

A DEVASTATING earthquake struck Kobe City in western Japan, and self-sacrificing volunteers quickly came to the aid of stricken residents. However, a visiting team of doctors found their request for medical supplies rebuffed by someone at the city's Health Bureau. That official, who was also the director of a large municipal hospital, wanted the victims to go

to Kobe hospitals rather than have the doctors administer expensive injections and intravenous fluids at relief centers. Eventually, the doctors' request was granted, but the official's initial inflexible attitude and seeming lack of compassion drew widespread criticism.

Perhaps you have been on the receiving end of similar intransigence by someone in

authority. You may even have been guilty of it yourself. Could you benefit from developing a broader point of view?

Get the Complete Picture

It is common for individuals to look at matters from just one angle, or point of view, thereby limiting their perception and understanding of matters. Often this is due to such factors as education, experience in life, and background. Wiser decisions can be reached when one endeavors to get the complete picture. For instance, if you were crossing a busy intersection where there are no stoplights, would it be wise just to look straight ahead? Certainly not! Similarly, broadening your thinking to get the entire view can be very helpful in making decisions and acting in a responsible manner. It can even be lifesaving.

Likely, all of us could make improvement in this regard. So ask yourself, 'What are some areas where I could possibly benefit by broadening my thinking?'

Your View of Others

What do you see when you look at others? Do you have the tendency to view what they say or do as either black or white, as if no other colors or shades existed? Is a comment someone makes either a compliment or an insult? Is someone either completely right or thoroughly wrong? Having that viewpoint would be like a photographer who ignores the large variety of brilliant hues and shades in an autumn landscape, as if only black and white images existed. Or do you tend to concentrate on the negative areas of a person's personality, much like a traveler who lets his enjoyment of a beautiful scene be spoiled by a bit of litter left by some inconsiderate visitor?—Compare Ecclesiastes 7:16.

Much can be learned by considering Jehovah's view of human error. While aware of man's many weaknesses and failings, he chooses not to focus or dwell on them.

The grateful psalmist observed: "If errors were what you watch . . . O Jehovah, who could stand?" (Psalm 130:3) Jehovah is willing to put errors far off from repentant sinners, yes magnanimously wiping them out, so that they are not a blemish on our relationship with him. (Psalm 51:1; 103:12) Jehovah could say of King David, who had at one point committed serious sins with Bathsheba, that he was a man "who walked after me with all his heart by doing only what was right in my eyes." (1 Kings 14:8) Why could God say this of David? Because he focused on repentant David's better qualities. He considered all the pertinent factors and chose to continue to extend mercy to his servant.

Christ Jesus flawlessly mirrored this broad view of the faults of others. (John 5:19) When faced with the shortcomings of his apostles, Jesus was merciful and understanding. He recognized regarding imperfect humans that even when 'the spirit is eager, the flesh is weak.' (Matthew 26:41) With this in mind, Jesus could deal with the weaknesses and faults of his disciples in a patient and understanding manner. He did not concentrate on their failings but, rather, focused on their good qualities.

On one occasion after correcting the apostles because they argued about who seemed to be the greatest, Jesus added: "However, you are the ones that have stuck with me in my trials; and I make a covenant with you, just as my Father has made a covenant with me, for a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel." (Luke 22:24-30) Yes, despite the apostles' many failings, Jesus remembered their faithfulness and their love for him. (Proverbs 17:17) Jesus had confidence in what they could and would do, so he concluded a covenant for a Kingdom with them. Yes, 'Jesus loved his disciples to the end.'—John 13:1.

So if someone's personality quirks and



Giving generously helps others, brings joy to the giver, and pleases our heavenly Father



In Material Giving

The privilege of giving is one of the joys extended to Christians. But need we limit our giving to just one activity, say for example, engaging in the field ministry? (Matthew 24:14; 28:19, 20) Or could your thinking be broadened to include the physical needs and welfare of others? Of course, all Christians appreciate that giving spiritually is of utmost importance. (John 6:26, 27; Acts 1:8) Yet, as important as giving spiritually is, giving materially is

faults tend to irritate you, be like Jehovah and Jesus. Broaden your thinking, and try to take all factors into consideration. By putting things in their proper perspective, you will find it easier to love and appreciate your brothers.

certainly not to be neglected.—James 2: 15, 16.

As we contemplate the urgent needs of our spiritual brothers in our own congregation and the world over, we can see more fully what we can do to help them. When

those who are in a position to do so share generously with others, an equalizing takes place. In this manner the needs of all of our brothers are cared for. A Christian elder expressed it this way: "If a need arises in one part of the world, brothers in another part of the world will come to their aid. If they are not in a position to help, then brothers somewhere else will do so. Thus the needs of our brothers worldwide are cared for. The worldwide brotherhood is certainly marvelous."—2 Corinthians 8:13-15; 1 Peter 2:17.

One Christian sister who sincerely desired to attend one of the international conventions held in Eastern Europe was just not in a position to do so. She heard, however, that the brothers there had a great need for Bibles, so she made a contribution for such Bibles through someone who attended. Thus she experienced the happiness of giving, of sharing with her brothers in a foreign land.—Acts 20:35.

Perhaps by widening out in your thinking you can make an even greater contribution to the ever-expanding worldwide Bible educational work, bringing joy to yourself and to others as well.—Deuteronomy 15:7; Proverbs 11:24; Philippians 4:14-19.

When Giving Counsel

When called on to give counsel or correction, considerate and balanced reasoning will help us to gain the respect of our spiritual brothers and to render truly effective assistance. It is so easy to concentrate on a few facts and jump to a hasty, one-sided conclusion. This gives the impression that we are narrow-minded, if not closed-minded, like the religious leaders of Jesus' day, who tended to burden others with their endless regulations. (Matthew 23:2-4) On the other hand, if we avoid extremes and provide fine counsel solidly based on Scriptural principles, reflecting Jehovah's righteous

yet balanced and merciful thinking, it will be much easier for others to accept and to apply our suggestions.

Some years ago young brothers from several congregations got together to engage in sports. Unfortunately, a spirit of competition developed among them, resulting in harsh verbal encounters. How did the local elders handle the problem? Recognizing the need for young ones to have recreation, they did not recommend that they stop altogether. (Ephesians 5:17; 1 Timothy 4:8) Rather, they gave firm yet reasonable warnings about what the spirit of competition could lead to. They also offered helpful suggestions, such as having older, responsible ones present. The youths appreciated the wisdom and balance of the counsel and responded well. Moreover, their respect and affection for the elders grew.

Work to Broaden Out

While you may not intentionally or knowingly hold prejudices, it will still take determined effort to broaden out in your thinking. As you study God's Word, meditate on it so as to grasp and appreciate Jehovah's way of thinking. (Psalm 139:17) Try to understand the reasons for statements made in the Bible and the principles involved, and strive to evaluate matters as Jehovah does. This will be in harmony with David's prayer: "Make me know your own ways, O Jehovah; teach me your own paths. Make me walk in your truth and teach me."—Psalm 25:4, 5.

As you adopt a broader perspective, you will be blessed. One blessing of a broadened viewpoint will be your gaining a reputation for being balanced and understanding. You will be able to respond in a more reasonable and understanding manner when rendering aid in varying situations. This, in turn, will contribute to the marvelous unity and harmony of the Christian brotherhood.

THE CREATOR CAN ADD MEANING TO YOUR LIFE

"Let them praise the name of Jehovah; for he himself commanded, and they were created."—PSALM 148:5.

HAVE you not come to know?" That may sound like just a leading question, moving many to respond, 'Come to know what?' But it is a serious question. And we can best appreciate the answer by noting its setting—the 40th chapter of the Bible book of Isaiah. An ancient Hebrew, Isaiah, wrote it, so the question is an old one. Yet, it is also very modern, relating to the core meaning of your life.

² Being that important, the question at Isaiah 40:28 merits our serious attention: "Have you not come to know or have you not heard? Jehovah, the *Creator* of the extremities of the earth, is a God to time indefinite." So the 'coming to know' involved earth's Creator, and the context shows that more than the earth is included. Two verses earlier Isaiah wrote about the stars: "Raise your eyes high up and see. Who has created these things? It is the One who is bringing forth the army of them even by number . . . Due to the abundance of dynamic energy, he also being vigorous in power, not one of them is missing."

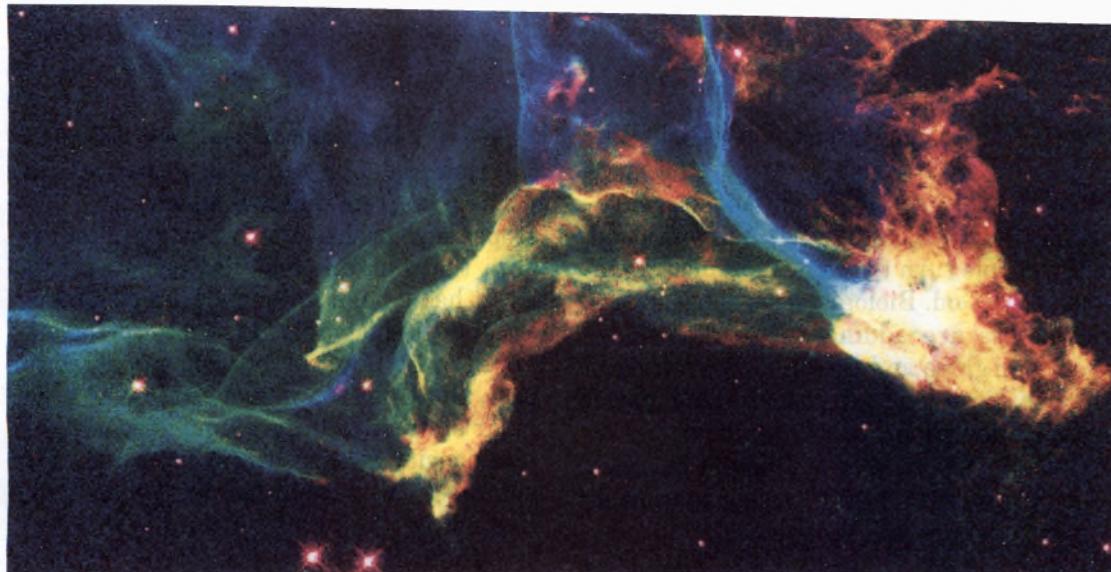
³ Yes, the question "Have you not come to know?" is actually about the Creator of our universe. You personally may be convinced that Jehovah God is "the Creator of the ex-

tremities of the earth." You also may know much about his personality and his ways. But what if you meet a man or a woman who doubts that there is a Creator and clearly does not know what he is like? Such an encounter should not be a surprise because there are millions upon millions who do not know of or believe in the Creator.—Psalm 14:1; 53:1.

⁴ Schools turn out many skeptics who feel that science has (or will find) answers to questions about the origin of the universe and life. In *The Origin of Life* (original French title: *Aux Origines de la Vie*) authors Hagene and Lenay note: "The origin of life is still debated at the beginning of the twenty-first century. This problem, so difficult to resolve, requires investigations in all fields, from the immensity of space to the infinite smallness of matter." Still, the last chapter, "The Question Remains Alive," admits: "We have explored some scientific answers to the question, How did life on earth appear? But *why* did life appear? Does life have a goal? These questions science cannot answer. It merely searches for the 'how' of things. 'How' and 'why' are two completely different questions. . . . As to the question of 'why,' philosophy, religion, and—above all—each one of us must find the answer."

- 1, 2. (a) What question should we consider?
- (b) How is creation involved in Isaiah's question?
3. Even if you know much about the Creator, why should you want to know more?

4. (a) Why is considering the Creator appropriate at this time? (b) What answers can science not provide?



Pages 15 and 18: Jeff Hester (Arizona State University) and NASA

The vastness and precision manifest in the universe have led many to think about the Creator

Finding Answers and Meaning

⁵ Yes, we want to understand why life exists—and especially why we are here. Moreover, we should be interested in people who have not yet concluded that there is a Creator and certainly know little about his ways. Or think of those whose background involves a concept of God very different from what the Bible presents. Billions have grown up in the Orient or in other places where most people do not think of a personal God, a real being with an appealing personality. To them the word “god” may evoke an impression of a vague force or an abstract cause. They have not ‘come to know the Creator’ or his ways. If they, or millions with similar views, could become convinced that the Creator exists, what benefits they could receive, including everlasting prospects! They could also gain something that is rare indeed—real meaning, real purpose and peace of mind, in life.

⁶ To illustrate: In 1891, French artist Paul

5. What sort of people may especially be benefited from learning more about the Creator?

6. How do the lives of many today bear a similarity to the experience of Paul Gauguin and to one of his paintings?

Gauguin went to find a fulfilling life in French Polynesia, in a virtual paradise. But his dissolute past soon brought disease to himself and others. As he felt death approaching, he painted a large canvas in which he seemed to ‘interpret life as a great mystery.’ Do you know what Gauguin named that painting? “Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?” You may have heard others ask similar questions. Many do. But when they find no satisfying answers—no real meaning in life—where can they go? They may conclude that their life differs little from that of the animals.—2 Peter 2:12.*

⁷ You can thus understand why someone like professor of physics Freeman Dyson could write: “I stand in good company when

* Drawing on experiences in Nazi concentration camps, Dr. Viktor E. Frankl realized: “Man’s search for meaning is a primary force in his life and not a ‘secondary rationalization’ of instinctual drives,” such as animals have. He added that decades after the second world war, a survey in France “showed that 89% of the people polled admitted that man needs ‘something’ for the sake of which to live.”

7, 8. Why are the investigations of science not adequate in themselves?

I ask again the questions Job asked. Why do we suffer? Why is the world so unjust? What is the purpose of pain and tragedy?" (Job 3:20, 21; 10:2, 18; 21:7) As mentioned, many people turn to science for answers instead of to God. Biologists, oceanographers, and others are adding to the knowledge about our globe and life on it. Searching in another direction, astronomers and physicists are learning ever more about our solar system, the stars, even distant galaxies. (Compare Genesis 11:6.) To what reasonable conclusions can such facts point?

⁸ Some scientists speak of the "mind" of God or the "handwriting" revealed in the universe. But might that miss the key point? *Science* magazine observed: "When researchers say cosmology reveals the 'mind' or 'handwriting' of God, they are ascribing to the divine what ultimately may be the lesser aspect of the universe—its physical structure." In fact, Nobel laureate physicist Steven Weinberg wrote: "The more the universe seems comprehensible, the more it also seems pointless."

⁹ Still, you may be among the millions who have seriously studied the matter and who grasp that real meaning in life relates to knowing the Creator. Recall what the apostle Paul wrote: "Men cannot say they do not know about God. From the beginning of the world, men could see what God is like through the things He has made. This shows His power that lasts forever. It shows that He is God." (Romans 1:20, *Holy Bible, New Life Version*) Yes, there are facts about our world and about us that can help people to recognize the Creator and to find meaning in connection with him. Consider three aspects of this: the universe around us, the origin of life, and our own mental abilities.

9. What evidence can help us and others to learn about the Creator?

Reasons to Believe

¹⁰ How did our universe get here? You may know from reports about space telescopes and probes that most scientists realize that our universe did not always exist. It had a beginning, and it is expanding. What does this imply? Listen to astronomer Sir Bernard Lovell: "If at some point in the past, the Universe was once close to a singular state of infinitely small size and infinite density, we have to ask what was there before . . . We have to face the problem of a Beginning."

¹¹ The makeup of the universe, including our earth, reflects amazing fine-tuning. For example, two remarkable qualities of our sun and other stars are long-term efficiency and stability. Current estimates of the number of galaxies in the visible universe range from 50 billion (50,000,000,000) to 125 billion. And our Milky Way galaxy has billions upon billions of stars in it. Now consider: We know that an automobile engine requires a critical ratio of fuel and air. If you own a car, you may hire a trained mechanic to tune its engine, so that your car will run smoother, more efficiently. If such precision is important with a mere engine, what of our efficiently "burning" sun, for example? Clearly, the key forces involved are precisely tuned for life to exist on earth. Did that just happen? Job of old was asked: "Did you proclaim the rules that govern the heavens, or determine the laws of nature on earth?" (Job 38:33, *The New English Bible*) No human did. So from whence came the precision?—Psalm 19:1.

¹² Might it be from some *thing* or from some *One* that cannot be seen with human

10. Why should we give thought to the "beginning"? (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 111:10)

11. (a) How vast is the universe? (b) What does the precision in the universe suggest?

12. Why is it not unreasonable to consider that a powerful Intelligence is behind creation?

eyes? Consider this question in the light of modern science. Most astronomers now accept that there are very powerful heavenly bodies—black holes. These black holes cannot be seen, yet experts are convinced that they exist. Comparably, the Bible reports that in another realm there exist powerful creatures that cannot be seen—spirit creatures. If such powerful, invisible beings exist, is it not plausible that the precision revealed throughout the universe originated with a powerful Intelligence?—Nehemiah 9:6.

¹³ A second line of evidence that can help people to acknowledge a Creator involves the origin of life. Since the time of experiments by Louis Pasteur, it has been accepted that life does not spring into existence out of nothing by spontaneous generation. So how did earthly life originate? In the 1950's, scientists tried to prove that it could have developed slowly in some early ocean when a primitive atmosphere was constantly being hit by lightning. More recent evidence shows, however, that such an origin of terrestrial life is improbable because that sort of atmosphere never existed. Consequently, some scientists are searching for a less flawed explanation. But are they also missing the point?

¹⁴ After spending decades studying the universe and life in it, British scientist Sir Fred Hoyle commented: "Rather than accept the fantastically small probability of life having arisen through the blind forces of nature, it seemed better to suppose that the origin of life was a deliberate intellectual act." Yes, the more we learn about the wonders of life, the more logical it is that it came from one intelligent Source.—Job 33:4; Psalm 8:3, 4; 36:9; Acts 17:28.

13, 14. (a) What has science actually established about the origin of life? (b) To what does the existence of life on earth point?

¹⁵ So a first line of reasoning involves the universe, and a second, the origin of life on earth. Note a third—our uniqueness. In many ways all humans are unique, so that means that you are too. How so? You have probably heard that the brain has been compared to a powerful computer. Really, though, recent discoveries show that this comparison falls far short. A scientist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology said: "Today's computers are not even close to a 4-year-old human in their ability to see, talk, move, or use common sense. . . . It has been estimated that the information processing capacity of even the most powerful supercomputer is equal to the nervous system of a snail—a tiny fraction of the power available to the supercomputer inside [your] skull."

¹⁶ Language is an ability that you have because of your brain. Some people speak two, three, or more languages, yet the ability to speak even one marks us as unique. (Isaiah 36:11; Acts 21:37-40) Professors R. S. and D. H. Fouts asked: "Is only man . . . capable of communicating by language? . . . All the higher animals certainly communicate with . . . gestures, odours, calls, cries and songs, and even the dance of the bees. Yet animals other than man do not appear to have structured grammatical language. And animals do not, which may be highly significant, draw representational pictures. At best they only doodle." Truly, only humans can use the brain to speak a language and draw meaningful pictures.—Compare Isaiah 8:1; 30:8; Luke 1:3.

¹⁷ Moreover, you have an awareness of self; you are conscious of you. (Proverbs 14:10) Have you watched a bird, dog, or cat look

15. Why can it be said that you are unique?

16. Your language ability points to what?

17. What is a fundamental difference between an animal's looking in a mirror and a human's doing so?

into a mirror and then peck, growl, or attack? It thinks it sees another animal, not recognizing itself. In contrast, when you look into a mirror, you know it is you. (James 1:23, 24) You may check your appearance or wonder what you will look like in a few years. Animals do not do that. Yes, your brain makes you unique. To where does the credit go? How did your brain come to be, if not from God?

¹⁸ Your brain also allows you to appreciate art and music as well as to have a moral sense. (Exodus 15:20; Judges 11:34; 1 Kings 6:1, 29-35; Matthew 11:16, 17) Why you and not the animals? They use their brains primarily to care for immediate needs—getting food, finding a mate, or making a nest. Only humans think beyond the short term. Some even think about how their actions will affect the environment or their descendants long into the future. Why? Ecclesiastes 3:11 says of humans: “Even time indefinite [the Creator] has put in their heart.” Yes, your capacity for considering the meaning of time indefinite or for imagining endless life is special.

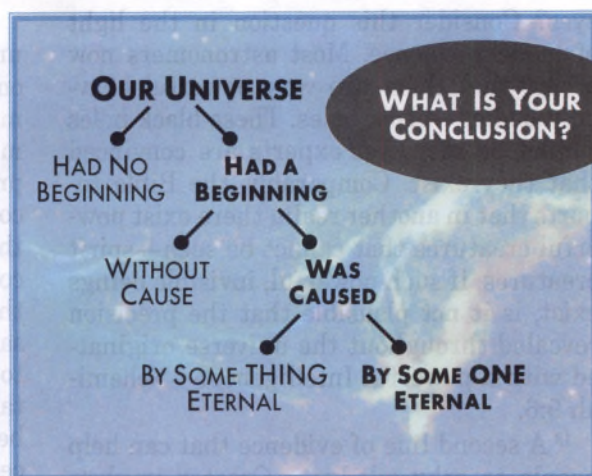
Let the Creator Add Meaning

¹⁹ We have touched on just three areas:

18. What mental capacities set you apart from animals?
19. What three-part line of reasoning might you use in helping others to think about the Creator?

How Would You Respond?

- ☐ Why do we need to go beyond getting scientific information about our universe?
- ☐ In helping others to think about the Creator, to what might you point?
- ☐ Why is knowing the Creator a key to having satisfying meaning in life?



the precision seen in the vast universe, the origin of life on earth, and the undeniable uniqueness of the human brain, with its varied capacities. To what do these three point? Here is a line of reasoning that you could use in helping others reach a conclusion. You could first ask: *Did the universe have a beginning?* Most would agree that it did. Then ask: *Was that beginning without any cause, or was it caused?* Most people sense that the beginning of the universe was caused. This leads to the final question: *Was the beginning caused by some thing eternal or by some One eternal?* With the issues thus presented clearly and logically, many can be led to conclude: There must be a Creator! That being so, should not meaning in life be possible?

²⁰ Our whole existence, including our sense of morality and the morality itself should be connected with the Creator. Dr. Rollo May once wrote: “The only adequate structure for morality is that based upon the ultimate meaning of life.” Where is that to be found? He continued: “The ultimate structure is the nature of God. The principles of God are the principles which

20, 21. Why is knowing the Creator essential to our having meaning in life?

underlie life from the beginning of creation to the end.”

²¹ We can well understand, then, why the psalmist was displaying both humility and wisdom when he begged the Creator: “Make me know your own ways, O Jehovah; teach me your own paths. Make me walk in your truth and teach me, for you are my God of salvation.” (Psalm 25:4, 5) As he came to know the Creator better, the psalmist’s life certainly would have had more meaning,

purpose, and direction. The same can be so with each of us.—Exodus 33:13.

²² Coming to know the Creator’s “own ways” includes coming to know even better what he is like, both his personality and his ways. But since the Creator is invisible and awesomely powerful, how can we get to know him better? The next article will consider this.

22. What is involved in coming to know the Creator’s ways?

YOUR CREATOR —LEARN WHAT HE IS LIKE

“I myself shall cause all my goodness to pass before your face, and I will declare the name of Jehovah before you.”—EXODUS 33:19.

THE apostle John, writer of the last Bible book, recorded this profound declaration about the Creator: “You are worthy, Jehovah, even our God, to receive the glory and the honor and the power, because you created all things, and because of your will they existed and were created.” (Revelation 4:11) As the preceding article established, the findings of modern science often add to reasons for believing in the Creator of all things.

² As important as it is to accept that the Creator exists, it is equally important to learn what he is like—that he is a real person, with a personality and ways that draw

people to him. To whatever extent you have done that, would it not be beneficial to get to know him better? That does not require meeting him personally, in the sense that we meet other humans.

³ Jehovah is the Source of even the stars, our sun being just a medium-sized star. Would you think of trying to have a close physical encounter with the sun? Hardly! Most people are careful about even glancing at it or exposing their skin to its powerful rays for a long time. Its core temperature is some 15,000,000 degrees Celsius (27,000,000°F.). Each second, this thermonuclear furnace transforms some four million tons of mass into energy. Just a fraction of it reaches earth as heat and light, but that amount sustains all life here. Those basic facts should impress us with the Creator’s

1. Why does the Creator deserve to be honored?
2, 3. (a) What do people need to learn about the Creator? (b) Why is personally meeting the Creator not reasonable?



awesome power. Well could Isaiah write about "the abundance of [the Creator's] dynamic energy, he also being vigorous in power."—Isaiah 40:26.

⁴ Yet, did you know that some months after the Israelites left Egypt in 1513 B.C.E., Moses begged the Creator: "Cause me to see, please, your glory." (Exodus 33:18) Remembering that God is the Source of even the sun, you can understand why he told Moses: "You are not able to see my face, because no man may see me and yet live." The Creator permitted Moses to take a hiding place on Mount Sinai while He "passed by." Moses was then exposed to God's "back," as it were, to some type of afterglow of the Creator's glory, or presence.—Exodus 33:20-23; John 1:18.

⁵ Moses' desire to get to know the Creator better did not go unsatisfied. Evidently speaking through an angel, God passed by Moses and declared: "Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth, preserving loving-kindness for thousands, pardoning error and transgression and sin, but by no means will he give exemption from punish-

4. What did Moses ask for, and how did Jehovah respond?

5. In what way did the Creator satisfy Moses' request, proving what?

What does our immune system suggest about our Creator?

ment." (Exodus 34:6, 7) This shows that getting to know our Creator better involves, not seeing a physical shape, but sensing in full-measure what he is like, his personality and characteristics.

⁶ One way we can do that is by discerning God's qualities from what he created. Consider your immune system. In an issue on immunity, *Scientific American* said: "From before birth until death, the immune system is in a state of constant alert. A diverse array of molecules and cells . . . protects us against parasites and pathogens. Without those defenses, humans could not survive." What is the source of that system? An article in that magazine said: "The marvelous array of deftly interacting cells that defend the body against microbial and viral invaders arises from a few precursor cells that first appear about nine weeks after conception." A pregnant woman passes some immunity to her developing fetus. Later, via her breast milk, she also provides immune cells and beneficial chemicals for her baby.

⁷ You have good reason to conclude that your immune system surpasses anything that modern medicine can provide. Hence, ask yourself, 'What does this suggest about its Originator and Supplier?' This system, which 'first appears about nine weeks after conception' and which is ready to protect a newborn, certainly reflects wisdom and forethought. But could we discern even more about the Creator from this system? What do most of us conclude about Albert Schweitzer and others who devoted their lives to providing medical care for the underprivileged? We usually ascribe good qual-

6. How is our immune system a marvel?

7. What might we consider about our immune system, leading to what conclusion?

A section of the Dead Sea Scrolls, with the Tetragrammaton (God's name in Hebrew) highlighted

ities to such compassionate humanitarians. Comparably, what can we conclude about our Creator, who provides an immune system to rich and poor alike? Clearly, he is loving, impartial, compassionate, and just. Is this not consistent with the description of the Creator that Moses heard?

He Reveals What He Is Like

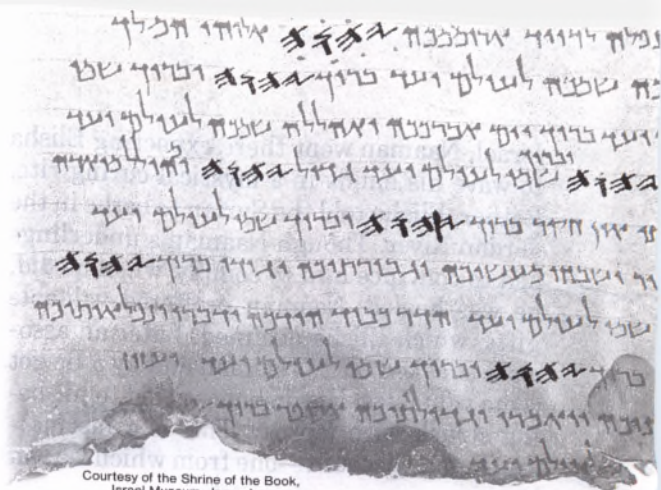
⁸ There is another way, though, to come to know our Creator better—by means of the Bible. This is particularly important because there are things about him that science and the universe cannot reveal at all and other things that are much clearer from the Bible. An example of the former is the Creator's personal name. Only the Bible discloses both the Creator's name and its import. In Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible, his name appears some 7,000 times as four consonants that can be transliterated YHWH or JHVH, commonly pronounced Jehovah in English.—Exodus 3:15; 6:3.

⁹ For us to come to know the Creator better, we need to appreciate that he is not just an abstract "First Cause" or a vague "I Am." His personal name shows that. It is a form of a Hebrew verb meaning "become" or "prove to be."* (Compare Genesis 27:29; Ecclesiastes 11:3.) God's name signifies "He Causes to Become" and emphasizes that he both purposes and acts. By our knowing and

* Jesuit scholar M. J. Gruenthaner, while editor-in-chief of *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly*, applied to this verb what he said about its kindred verb, that it "never has the notion of existence in the abstract but always expresses being or becoming phenomenally, i.e., manifesting itself concretely."

8. Jehovah reveals himself to us in what special way?

9. What does the Creator's personal name mean, and what can we conclude from this?



Courtesy of the Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum, Jerusalem

using his name, we can better appreciate that he fulfills promises and actively brings his purpose to realization.

¹⁰ The Bible is the source of knowledge of God's purposes and personality. The Genesis record reveals that at one time mankind was at peace with God and had the prospect of a long, meaningful life. (Genesis 1:28; 2:7-9) Consistent with the import of his name, we can be sure that Jehovah will end the suffering and frustration that humans have long faced. We read about the fulfilling of his purpose: "The physical world was made subject to frustration, not by its own desire, but by the will of the Creator, who in making it so, gave it a hope that it might one day be . . . made to share the glorious liberty of the children of God."—Romans 8:20, 21, *The New Testament Letters*, by J. W. C. Wand.

¹¹ The Bible can also help us to come to know our Creator better in that it reveals his actions and reactions when dealing with ancient Israel. Consider an example involving Elisha and Naaman, the military chief of the hostile Syrians. As you read this account in 2 Kings chapter 5, you will see that a captive Israelite girl urged that Naaman's leprosy might be cured with help from Elisha in

10. We can gain what important insight from the Genesis record?

11. Why might we consider Bible accounts, and what are the details of one such account?

Israel. Naaman went there expecting Elisha to wave his hands in a mystical curing rite. Rather, Elisha told the Syrian to bathe in the Jordan River. Though Naaman's underlings had to convince him to comply, when he did, he was healed. Naaman proffered valuable gifts, which Elisha declined. Later an associate sneaked off to Naaman and by a lie got some valuables. His dishonesty led to his being struck with leprosy. This is a fascinating, human account—one from which we can learn.

¹² The account, in an appealing way, shows that the Grand Creator of the universe is not too lofty to note with favor a little girl, quite in contrast with the norm in many cultures today. It also proves that the Creator does not favor only one race or nation. (Acts 10:34, 35) Interestingly, instead of expecting people to use hocus-pocus—common with some “healers” of the past and present—the Creator displayed marvelous wisdom. He knew how to cure leprosy. He also manifested insight and justice in not permitting fraud to succeed. Again, is that not consistent with Jehovah's personality that Moses heard about? Though that Bible account is brief, how much we can detect from it about what our Creator is like!—Psalm 33:5; 37:28.

¹³ Other accounts about Israel's ungrateful actions and God's response prove that Jehovah truly cares. The Bible says that the Israelites put him to the test again and again, making him feel hurt and pained. (Psalm 78:40, 41) Hence, the Creator has feelings, and he cares about what humans do. There is much to be learned, too, from accounts about well-known individuals. When David was chosen to be king of Israel, God told Samuel: “Mere man sees what appears to the eyes; but as for Jehovah, he sees what the

heart is.” (1 Samuel 16:7) Yes, the Creator looks at what we are inside, not at mere outward appearances. How satisfying!

¹⁴ Thirty-nine of the Bible books were written before the time of Jesus, and it behooves us to read them. This should not be merely to learn Bible accounts or history. If we really want to learn what our Creator is like, we should meditate on those accounts, perhaps thinking, ‘What does this episode bring to light about his personality? Which of his qualities shine through here?’* Doing so may help even skeptics to see that the Bible must be of divine origin, thus laying a basis for their coming to know its loving Author better.

A Great Teacher Helps Us to Know the Creator

¹⁵ Granted, people who doubt the Creator's existence or whose view of God is vague may know little about the Bible. Perhaps you have met individuals who could not say whether Moses lived before or after Matthew and who know virtually nothing of Jesus' deeds or teachings. That is most sad because one can learn so much about the Creator from the Great Teacher, Jesus. Having had a close relationship with God, he could reveal what our Creator is like. (John 1:18; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Hebrews 1:3) And he did so. In fact, he once said: “He that has seen me has seen the Father also.” —John 14:9.

¹⁶ Consider this example. On an occasion

* As parents relate Bible accounts to their children, they can help their offspring by bringing up such questions. Thus youths can become acquainted with God, as well as learn to meditate on his Word.

14. As we read the Hebrew Scriptures, what can we beneficially do?

15. Why should Jesus' actions and teachings be instructive?

16. Jesus' interaction with a Samaritan woman illustrates what?

12. We can draw what conclusions about the Creator from the account of Elisha and Naaman?

13. Illustrate how we might draw valuable lessons from Bible accounts.



What can we learn from Jesus' reaction to Mary's grief?

when Jesus was tired from traveling, he spoke with a Samaritan woman near Sychar. He shared profound truths, centering on the need to “worship the Father with spirit and truth.” Jews of that era shunned Samaritans. In contrast, Jesus reflected Jehovah’s willingness to accept sincere men and women of all nations, even as we noted from the incident involving Elisha and Naaman. It should reassure us that Jehovah is above the narrow-minded religious hostility that permeates the world today. We can also take note of the fact that Jesus was willing to teach a woman, and in this case a woman living with a man not her husband. Instead of condemning her, Jesus treated her with dignity, in a way that could really help her.

Thereafter, other Samaritans listened to Jesus and concluded: “We know that this man is for a certainty the savior of the world.” —John 4:2-30, 39-42; 1 Kings 8:41-43; Matthew 9:10-13.

¹⁷ Let us consider another illustration of how we can learn about the Creator by familiarizing ourselves with Jesus’ actions and teachings. Reflect on the occasion when Jesus’ friend Lazarus died. Jesus had previously proved his power to bring the dead back to life. (Luke 7:11-17; 8:40-56) How, though, did he react to seeing Lazarus’ sister Mary mourning? Jesus “groaned in the spirit and became troubled.” He was not

17. To what conclusion does the account of Lazarus’ resurrection point?

indifferent or aloof; he “gave way to tears.” (John 11:33-35) And this was not a mere display of emotion. Jesus was moved to positive action—he resurrected Lazarus. You can imagine how this helped the apostles to appreciate the Creator’s feelings and actions. It should also help us and others to understand the Creator’s personality and ways.

¹⁸ There is no reason to be ashamed of studying the Bible and learning more about our Creator. The Bible is not an antiquated book. One who studied it and became a close associate of Jesus was John. He later wrote: “We know that the Son of God has come, and he has given us intellectual capacity that we may gain the knowledge of the true one. And we are in union with the true one, by means of his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and life everlasting.” (1 John 5:20) Observe that employing “intellectual capacity” to gain knowledge of “the true one,” the Creator, can lead to “life everlasting.”

How Can You Help Others Learn About Him?

¹⁹ A lot is required for some people to believe that there is a compassionate Creator who cares about us and to appreciate what he is like. There are millions upon millions who are yet skeptical about the Creator or whose view of him does not correspond to what is found in the Bible. How can you help them? At the 1998/99 district and international conventions of Jehovah’s Witnesses, an effective new tool was released in many languages—the book *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?*

²⁰ It is a publication that will enhance your

18. How should people feel about studying the Bible?

19. What step has been taken to help skeptical people?

20, 21. (a) How can the *Creator* book be used successfully? (b) Relate experiences of how the *Creator* book has already proved effective.

own faith in our Creator and your appreciation for his personality and ways. Why is this certain? Because *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?* has been specially designed with such goals in mind. A thread running through the book is “What can add meaning to your life?” The contents are presented in a way that even people with considerable education will find intriguing. Yet, it touches on longings that all of us have. There is fascinating and persuasive material for readers who doubt the Creator’s existence. The book does not assume that the reader believes in a Creator. Those who are skeptical will be captivated by the treatment of recent scientific discoveries and concepts. Such facts will even strengthen the faith of those who believe in God.

²¹ In studying this new book, it will be seen that parts of it present an overview of Bible history in a way that highlights aspects of God’s personality, helping readers come to know God better. Many who have already read it have commented on how that has been true in their case. (See the following article, pages 25-6.) May that also be so with you as you familiarize yourself with the book and use it to help others to come to know their Creator better.

Did You Note?

- ☐ How did Moses become better acquainted with Jehovah on Mount Sinai?
- ☐ Why is studying the Bible an aid to knowing what God is like?
- ☐ As we read the Bible, what can we do to draw closer to our Creator?
- ☐ In what way do you plan to make use of the *Creator* book?



Is There a
Creator
Who Cares About You?

"Words cannot express the joy and excitement that continue to grow as I devour *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?* It just creates within one a desire—no, a need—to know more. Thank you for lighting fires of curiosity in my heart and mind."

THAT is how one of Jehovah's Witnesses from North Carolina, U.S.A., felt about the book released by the Watch Tower Society at the "God's Way of Life" District Conventions during 1998/99. Even if you do not have a copy of the book, note other responses.

Days after receiving his copy at a San Diego, California, U.S.A., convention, a man wrote: "I'm finding this book to be very faith strengthening. It fills my heart with deep appreciation for Jehovah's creative works. I'm up to page 98, and I'm dreading the day I'll reach the end! It is that much of a satisfying joy."

An Oriental woman wrote: "The convention speaker used the expression 'a unique book,' and that expression really matches the content. An outstanding feature is that the book does not push the existence of God on the reader, yet it presents the facts."

The facts include fascinating scientific discoveries about our universe, life, and us. This impressed many. "I really do not have words to express how deeply this little book has affected me," wrote a woman from California. "I could not put the book down as each page de-

scribed more unfolding discoveries about our universe and life itself. I really learned so much! I will treasure this little book and share it with as many as possible."

A feature that delighted many is how the book gives a synopsis of the Bible, highlighting the Creator's personality.

"The overall view of the Bible, presented toward the back of the book, is one of the best that I have read," is a typical comment. On the heels of an early convention in New York, U.S.A., another wrote: "The new release has got to be the most absorbing publication you've printed. I was enthralled with the scientific proofs that there is a Creator. The concise synopsis of the Bible itself is just enough to explain the points being made and to whet the appetite to read more."

Understandable Science

The scientific information in early chapters might seem to be intimidating, but here are typical reactions.

A Canadian man wrote: "What a contrast to the technical books whose authors try to impress us with their big words. Your scholarship is outstanding in making the subjects of physics,

'Fires of Curiosity in Heart and Mind'

chemistry, DNA, chromosomes, etc., so understandable to us. If only you had written the university textbooks I studied years ago!"

A university professor of physics wrote: "[It] clearly presents the issues involved without getting bogged down by technical detail. The book reasons with the reader and quotes from many leading scientists. This is a 'must read' for anyone interested in the origin of the universe and life, either as a scientist or as a layman."

A young woman taking a nursing course commented: "I could not believe my eyes to open to chapter 4 and read a quote from the book that we are using in class! I gave the book to our professor and told him I knew that he would find the information refreshing. I showed him page 54 about the brain. He read it to himself and said, 'This is interesting! I'll check it out.'"

A member of parliament in Belgium wrote: "What struck me and captivated me was the scientific outline that underlines that modern science is not opposed to the Bible's monotheism intuition but, rather, joins them. This is a very successful outlook."

Knowing the Creator Better

The book helped people in many lands to know God better and to feel much closer to him. A reader in Fukuoka City, Japan, observed: "It is as though the lens were precisely focused on Jehovah for the first time. The book is wonderfully convincing. I was able to come to know Jehovah from a standpoint I've never thought of until now." A Salvadoran wrote: "You explain very clearly how merciful, gracious, slow to anger, and abundant in loving-kindness God is. Truly, this is precisely what we need to be closer to him and to his Son. It is the first book that explains the sentiments of Jehovah and the human feelings of his Son, Jesus." And a reader in Zambia responded: "Jehovah

took on an altogether new meaning for me."

Understandably, Jehovah's Witnesses are excited about sharing with others *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?* One noted: "As I finished reading chapter 10 ['If the Creator Cares, Why So Much Suffering?'],

I just could not help but exclaim, 'This is exactly the book that we need in Japan!' I would like to make the material in this chapter my own and use it in the field service more and more." Another woman is studying the Bible with a girl who was brought up in a temple where her father is the priest. "She has a hard time accepting the concept of the Creator. There is nothing pushy in this book's explanation, but the facts are there, so I think even Buddhists can read it without hesitation. It also makes us feel Jehovah's love more."

From England came the evaluation: "I have just finished the *Creator* book and am about to start reading it again. What a marvelous book! One can only love Jehovah when reading it. I have given one to my neighbour, who after reading just two chapters said, 'I cannot put it down, it's so exciting.' I'm sure this will help people get to know and love our Grand Creator."

A man in Maryland, U.S.A., said: "It truly has been incisive to my spiritual bones and marrow! I plan to give a copy to all the people I do business with. I sometimes find it difficult to begin a witness with such busy, educated people. With this book I will now find the appealing, effective approach."

Clearly, the book *Is There a Creator Who Cares About You?* will have a positive impact on people earth wide.



QUESTIONS FROM READERS

Since sterilization procedures are now said to be reversible on request, might a Christian view them as a birth-control option?

Sterilization has become the most widely used means of family planning. For many people, its acceptability seems determined by social and educational background, as well as by religious views. The aspect of religious belief comes into play with Jehovah's Witnesses, who share the psalmist's desire: "Instruct me, O Jehovah, in your way, and lead me in the path of uprightness." (Psalm 27:11) What is involved in sterilization procedures?

Male sterilization for birth control is called a vasectomy. Two small sperm cords, or tubes, in the scrotum are cut and blocked. This can be done in various medical ways, but the intent is to make it impossible for sperm to pass from the testicles. Female sterilization is called tubal ligation. It is usually done by cutting and tying (or, burning) closed the Fallopian tubes, which carry eggs from the ovaries to the uterus.

It was long considered that these steps were permanent—that they produced irreversible sterilization. But some people, because of regretting their step or as a result of new circumstances, have sought medical help to undo a vasectomy or tubal ligation. With the advent of specialized instruments and microsurgery, attempts at reversal have been more successful. It is not uncommon to read that with selected candidates there can be 50 to 70 percent success in reversing a vasectomy by rejoining the severed ends of the tiny tubes. Rates of 60 to 80 percent success for reversing female tubal ligation are claimed. Some who have learned about this have felt that sterilization need no longer be viewed as permanent. They might believe that a vasectomy and tubal ligation can be viewed as being in the same category as oral contraceptives, condoms, and diaphragms—methods that can be discontinued if a pregnancy is desired. Yet, some sobering aspects should not be ignored.

One is that prospects for a reversal can be hurt

dramatically by such factors as the amount of damage to tubes during the sterilization procedure, the amount of the tube removed or scarred, the number of years that have passed since the procedure, and in the case of a vasectomy, whether antibodies against the man's sperm have resulted. And not to be ignored is the fact that facilities for microsurgery may not be available in many areas, or the expense may be prohibitive. Thus, many who might desperately wish to have a sterilization reversed would not be able to. For them it is final.* So the above-noted rates for reversals are really just theoretical, not dependable averages.

Some facts bear on the realities. An article published in the United States on reversing a vasectomy commented that after the \$12,000 operation, "only 63 percent of patients can impregnate their partners." Moreover, just "six percent of men who get a vasectomy eventually seek a reversal." In a German study about central Europe, some 3 percent of men who chose to be sterilized later sought reversal. Even if half of those attempts could succeed, it would mean that for 98.5 percent, having a vasectomy amounted to permanent sterilization. And the rate would be higher in lands with few or no microsurgeons.

Consequently, it is unrealistic to treat male or female sterilization lightly, as if it were temporary birth control. And for the sincere Christian, there are other aspects to consider.

A central point is that reproductive powers are a gift from our Creator. His original purpose

* "Surgical attempts to reconnect the [vas deferens] have a success rate of at least 40 percent, and there is some evidence that greater success may be achieved with improved microsurgical techniques. Nevertheless, sterilization by means of vasectomy should be considered permanent." (*Encyclopædia Britannica*) "Sterilization should be regarded as a permanent procedure. Despite what the patient may have heard about reversal, reanastomosis is expensive, and success cannot be guaranteed. For women who undergo reversal of tubal sterilization, the risk of ectopic pregnancy is high."—*Contemporary OB/GYN*, June 1998.

included procreation by perfect humans, who would "fill the earth and subdue it." (Genesis 1:28) After the Flood cut earth's population to eight, God repeated those basic instructions. (Genesis 9:1) God did not repeat that command to the nation of Israel, but Israelites viewed having offspring as something very desirable.—1 Samuel 1:1-11; Psalm 128:3.

God's Law to Israel contained indications of his regard for human procreation. For example, if a married man died before producing a son to carry on his lineage, his brother was to father a son by brother-in-law marriage. (Deuteronomy 25:5) More to the point was the law about a wife who tried to help her husband in a fight. If she grasped the privates of her husband's opponent, her hand was to be amputated; significantly, God did not require eye-for-eye damage to her or her husband's reproductive organs. (Deuteronomy 25:11, 12) This law would clearly engender respect for reproductive organs; these were not to be destroyed needlessly.*

We know that Christians are not under Israel's Law, so the regulation at Deuteronomy 25:11, 12 is not binding on them. Jesus neither ordered nor implied that his disciples must marry and have as many children as possible, which many couples have considered when deciding on whether to use some method of birth control. (Matthew 19:10-12) The apostle Paul did encourage passionate 'younger widows to marry and bear children.' (1 Timothy 5:11-14) He did not bring up the permanent sterilization of Christians—their vol-

untarily sacrificing their reproductive potential to bear children.

Christians do well to weigh such indications that God esteems their reproductive ability. Each couple must determine if and when they will employ appropriate methods of family planning. Granted, their decision would be particularly telling if there were confirmed medical assurances that mother or child faced grave medical risks, even a probability of death, with a future pregnancy. Some in that situation have reluctantly submitted to a sterilization procedure as described earlier to make sure that no pregnancy would threaten the life of the mother (who may already have other children) or that of a child who might later be born with a life-threatening health problem.

But Christians who are not facing such an unusual and distinct risk would certainly want to use 'soundness of mind' and shape their thinking and deeds by God's esteem for reproductive potential. (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8; 2:2, 5-8) This would reflect mature sensitivity to Scriptural indications. Yet, what if it became publicly known that a Christian blithely disregarded God's evaluations? Would not others doubt whether he (or, she) was a good example, having a reputation of making decisions in harmony with the Bible? Such a disturbing blemish on one's reputation could, of course, affect a minister's being qualified for special privileges of service, though that might not be so if one had in ignorance had this procedure performed.—1 Timothy 3:7.

* Another law that might seem relevant said that no man whose genitals were severely damaged could come into God's congregation. (Deuteronomy 23:1) However, *Insight on the Scriptures* notes that this evidently "had to do with deliberate emasculation for immoral purposes, such as homosexuality." Hence, that law did not involve castration or the equivalent for birth control. *Insight* also says: "Jehovah comfortingly foretold the time when eunuchs would be accepted by him as his servants and, if obedient, would have a name better than sons and daughters. With the abolition of the Law by Jesus Christ, all persons exercising faith, regardless of their former status or condition, could become spiritual sons of God. Fleshly distinctions were removed.—Isa 56:4, 5; Joh 1:12."

In Our Next Issue

How Can Jesus Change Your Life?

Parents, What Does Your Example Teach?

Families, Praise God as Part of His Congregation

'I REALLY THOUGHT I OUGHT to commit many acts of opposition against the name of Jesus the Nazarene; which, in fact, I did in Jerusalem. Many of the holy ones I locked up in prisons, as I had received authority from the chief priests. When the disciples were to be executed, I cast my vote against them. By punishing them many times in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to make a recantation. Since I was extremely mad against them, I went so far as to persecuting them even in outside cities.' —Acts 26:9-11.

SO SAID Saul of Tarsus, also known as the apostle Paul. By the time he said this, of course, he was a new man. No longer an opposer of Christianity, he was now one of its most ardent promoters. But what had formerly motivated Saul to persecute Christians? Why did he think 'he ought to commit' such deeds? And is there any lesson to be drawn from his story?

The Stoning of Stephen

Saul enters the Bible record among those killing Stephen. "After throwing [Stephen] outside the city, they began casting stones at him. And the witnesses laid down their outer garments at the feet of a young man called Saul." "Saul, for his part, was approving of the murder of him." (Acts 7:58; 8:1) What led to that assault? Jews, including some from Cilicia, disputed with Stephen but were unable to hold their own against him. Whether Saul, also a Cilician, was among them is not stated. In any case, they used false witnesses

Why Did Saul Persecute Christians?



to accuse Stephen of blasphemy and dragged him before the Sanhedrin. (Acts 6:9-14) This assembly, presided over by the high priest, acted as the Jewish high court. As the ultimate religious authority, its members also safeguarded what they held to be doctrinal purity. In their view Stephen was deserving of death. He dared to accuse them of not observing the Law, did he? (Acts 7:53) They would show him how it was to be observed!

Saul's approval of that opinion was a logical consequence of his convictions. He was a Pharisee. This powerful sect demanded strict observance of law and tradition. Christianity was held to be the antithesis of those tenets, teaching a new way to salvation through Jesus. First-century Jews expected the Messiah to be a glorious King who would free them from the hated yoke of Roman domination. That the one who was condemned by the Great Sanhedrin on a charge of blasphemy and thereafter impaled on a torture stake like an accursed criminal could be the

Messiah was thus completely alien, unacceptable, and repellent to their mentality.

The Law stated that a man hung upon a stake was “accursed of God.” (Deuteronomy 21:22, 23; Galatians 3:13) From Saul’s viewpoint, “these words were clearly applicable to Jesus,” comments Frederick F. Bruce. “He had died under the curse of God, and therefore could not conceivably be the Messiah, upon whom, almost by definition, the blessing of God rested in unique measure. To claim that Jesus was the Messiah was therefore blasphemous; those who made such a preposterous claim deserved to suffer as blasphemers.” As Saul himself later acknowledged, the very idea of the “Christ impaled [was] to the Jews a cause for stumbling.” —1 Corinthians 1:23.

Saul’s reaction to such a teaching was to oppose it with the greatest possible determination. Even brute force was to be used in an effort to stamp it out. He was sure that this was what God wanted. Describing the spirit he nurtured, Saul said: “As respects zeal, [I was] persecuting the congregation; as respects righteousness that is by means of law, one who proved himself blameless.” “To the point of excess I kept on persecuting the congregation of God and devastating it, and I was making greater progress in Judaism than many of my own age in my race, as I was far more zealous for the traditions of my fathers.” —Philippians 3:6; Galatians 1:13, 14.

Protagonist in Persecution

After Stephen’s death, Saul no longer figures as a mere accessory to persecution but as its champion. As such, he must have acquired a certain notoriety, since even after his conversion, when he made efforts to join himself to the disciples, “they were *all* afraid of him, because they did not believe he was a disciple.” When it became clear that he really was a Christian, his conversion became a

cause for rejoicing and thanksgiving among the disciples, who heard, not that just *any* former opposer had undergone a change of heart, but rather that “*the man* that formerly persecuted us is now declaring the good news about the faith which he formerly devastated.” —Acts 9:26; Galatians 1:23, 24.

Damascus lay some 140 miles—a seven- or eight-day walk—from Jerusalem. Yet, “breathing threat and murder against the disciples,” Saul went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues in Damascus. Why? So that Saul might bring bound to Jerusalem any whom he found who belonged to “The Way.” With official approval, he ‘began to deal outrageously with the congregation, invading one house after another, dragging out both men and women to turn them over to prison.’ Others he had ‘flogged in the synagogues,’ and he ‘cast his vote’ (literally, his “voting pebble”) in favor of their execution.—Acts 8:3; 9:1, 2, 14; 22:5, 19; 26:10, footnote.

Considering the schooling Saul received under Gamaliel and the powers he now wielded, some scholars believe that he had progressed from being a mere student of the Law to the point of exercising a measure of authority in Judaism. One supposed, for example, that Saul may have become a teacher in a Jerusalem synagogue. However, what is meant by Saul’s ‘casting his vote’—whether as a member of a court or as one expressing his moral support for the executions of Christians—we cannot be certain.*

* According to the book *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* (175 B.C.–A.D. 135), by Emil Schürer, although the Mishnah contains no account of the procedures of the Great Sanhedrin, or Sanhedrin of Seventy-One, those of the lesser Sanhedrins, of 23 members, are set out in minute detail. Law students could attend capital cases tried by the lesser Sanhedrins, where they were permitted to speak only for and not against the accused. In cases not involving a capital offense, they could do both.

Since at the outset all Christians were Jews or Jewish proselytes, Saul apparently understood Christianity to be an apostate movement within Judaism, and he considered it the business of official Judaism to set its adherents straight. "It is not likely," says scholar Arland J. Hultgren, "that Paul the persecutor would have opposed Christianity because he saw it as a religion outside of Judaism, a competitor. The Christian movement would have been seen by him and others as subject yet to Jewish authority." His intention then was to force wayward Jews to recant and return to orthodoxy, using all available means. (Acts 26:11) One method open to him was imprisonment. Another was flogging in the synagogues, a common means of discipline that could be administered as a chastisement for disobedience against rabbinical authority in any local court of three judges.

Jesus' appearance to Saul on the road to Damascus, of course, put a stop to all of that. From being a fierce enemy of Christianity, Saul suddenly became an ardent advocate of it, and soon enough the Jews in Damascus were seeking *his* death. (Acts 9:1-23) Para-

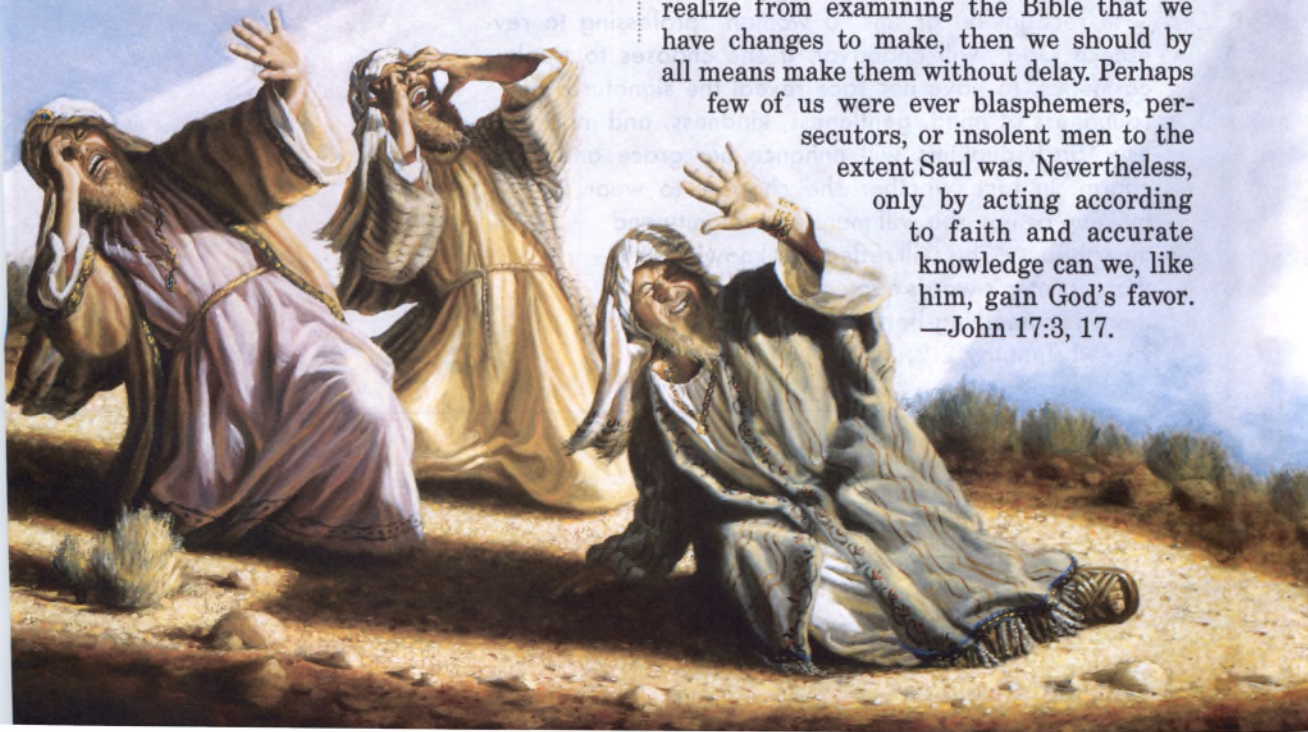
doxically, as a Christian, Saul was to suffer many things he himself had meted out as a persecutor, so that years later he could say: "By Jews I five times received forty strokes less one."—2 Corinthians 11:24.

Zeal Can Be Misdirected

"Formerly I was a blasphemer and a persecutor and an insolent man," wrote Saul after his conversion, when he was better known as Paul. "Nevertheless, I was shown mercy, because I was ignorant and acted with a lack of faith." (1 Timothy 1:13) Being sincere and active in one's religion, therefore, is no guarantee of having God's approval. Saul was zealous and acted according to conscience, but that did not make him right. His fiery zeal was misdirected. (Compare Romans 10:2, 3.) That should make us reflect.

Many today are firmly convinced that good conduct is all that God requires of them. But is it? Each one would do well to listen to Paul's exhortation: "Make sure of all things; hold fast to what is fine." (1 Thessalonians 5:21) That means taking time to acquire accurate knowledge of God's Word of truth and then living in full harmony with it. If we realize from examining the Bible that we have changes to make, then we should by all means make them without delay. Perhaps

few of us were ever blasphemers, persecutors, or insolent men to the extent Saul was. Nevertheless, only by acting according to faith and accurate knowledge can we, like him, gain God's favor.
—John 17:3, 17.



Something Better Than Cosmetics

AFTER referring to "outward aids" that women used as beauty enhancers, the apostle Peter advised: "Instead, your beauty should consist of your true inner self, the ageless beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of the greatest value in God's sight."—1 Peter 3:3, 4, *Today's English Version*.

Interestingly, when the apostle wrote of such external adornment, he used a form of the Greek word *ko'smos*, which is also the root of the English word "cosmetic," meaning "making for beauty esp[ecially] of the complexion." Was Peter imposing on Christian women a prohibition relative to the use of makeup and other similar beauty aids? There is nothing in God's Word that suggests that. Rather, it allows for personal decision on this matter, so a degree of variation in taste can be expected.

However, if the application of makeup is overdone, or done to a degree that disturbs many others, what message is conveyed? Is it not one of harshness, brashness, gaudiness, ostentation, or narcissism? Indeed, it can cheapen a woman's appearance, possibly giving the wrong impression as to moral character.—Compare Ezekiel 23:36-42.

In recognition of this, a woman "professing to reverence God" will endeavor, if she chooses to apply cosmetics, to have her face reveal the signatures of soundness of mind, gentleness, kindness, and modesty. Such qualities will enhance her grace and charm. In fact, whether she chooses to wear makeup or not, she will manifest a dignity and inner beauty. This will reflect her knowledge that, as Peter's words quoted above imply, there is something better than cosmetics.—1 Timothy 2:9, 10.

