

THE WATCHTOWER

ANNOUNCING JEHOVAH'S KINGDOM

MAY 1, 1996



**GOD
AND THE
STATE
paying each
what is due**

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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GOD, the STATE, and YOU

"Church and State Face Off in Referendum on Divorce in Ireland"

THIS headline in *The New York Times* illustrates how people today may be confronted with a choice between what the State wants and what their church teaches.

The article stated: "With less than a month before a referendum on whether to abolish its constitutional ban on divorce, overwhelmingly Roman Catholic Ireland is witnessing a rare clash

between the leaders of its Government and those of its church." The State proposed the removal of the ban on divorce, whereas the Catholic Church strongly opposes divorce and remarriage. Irish Catholics had to choose between Church and State. As it turned out, the State won by a narrow margin.

More dramatically, for many years people in Northern Ireland have been faced with a bitter conflict over national sovereignty. Many have been killed. Roman Catholics and Protestants have had opposing views on which



Tom Haley/Sipa Press

State to submit to: continued British rule in Northern Ireland or a centralized government for the whole of Ireland.

Similarly, in what was Yugoslavia, the ruling authorities have required members of different faiths, including the Catholic and the Orthodox, to fight in a battle for territory. For average citizens, where did their first duty lie? Were they to follow those who claimed to represent the State, or were they to obey God, who says: "You

must not murder . . . You must love your neighbor as yourself"?—Romans 13:9.

You may think that this kind of situation may never affect you. But it could. In fact, it may concern you even now. In his book *The State in the New Testament*, theologian Oscar Cullmann speaks of "life-and-death decisions modern Christians must or may be called upon to make in desperate situations when threatened by totalitarian governments." However, he also speaks of "the equally real and important responsibility of *every* Christian—also the Christian living under so-called 'normal,' 'everyday' conditions—to face and answer a serious problem which confronts him simply because he *is* a Christian."

So should the relationship between religion and the State interest Christians today? It certainly should. From the earliest times, Christians have tried to cultivate a balanced view of secular authorities. Their Leader, Jesus Christ, was judged, condemned, and executed by the Roman State. His disciples had to reconcile their Christian obligations with their duties to the Roman Empire. A review of their relationship with the authorities will, therefore, provide guidelines for Christians today.



EARLY CHRISTIANITY and the STATE

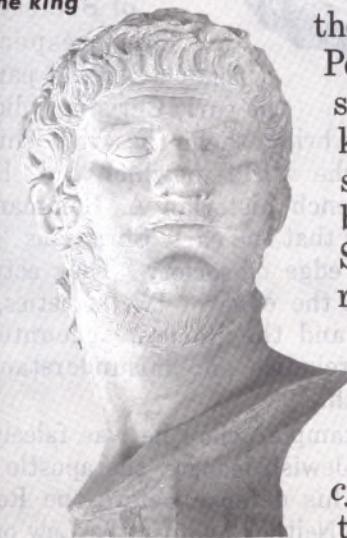
AFEW hours before his death, Jesus told his disciples: "You are no part of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, on this account the world hates you." (John 15:19) Does this mean, though, that Christians would adopt a hostile attitude toward the authorities of this world?

Not Worldly but Not Hostile

The apostle Paul told Christians living in Rome: "Let every soul be in subjection to the superior authorities." (Romans 13:1) Similarly, the apostle Peter wrote: "For the Lord's sake subject yourselves to every human creation: whether to a king as being superior or to governors as being sent by him to inflict punishment on evildoers but to praise doers of good." (1 Peter 2:13, 14) Subjection to the State and its duly appointed representatives was clearly an accepted principle among the early Christians. They endeavored to be law-abiding citizens and to live peaceably with all men —Romans 12:18

Under the topic "Church and State," *The Encyclopedia of Religion* declares: "In the first three centuries AD the Christian church was

Caesar Nero, of whom Peter wrote: "Have honor for the king"



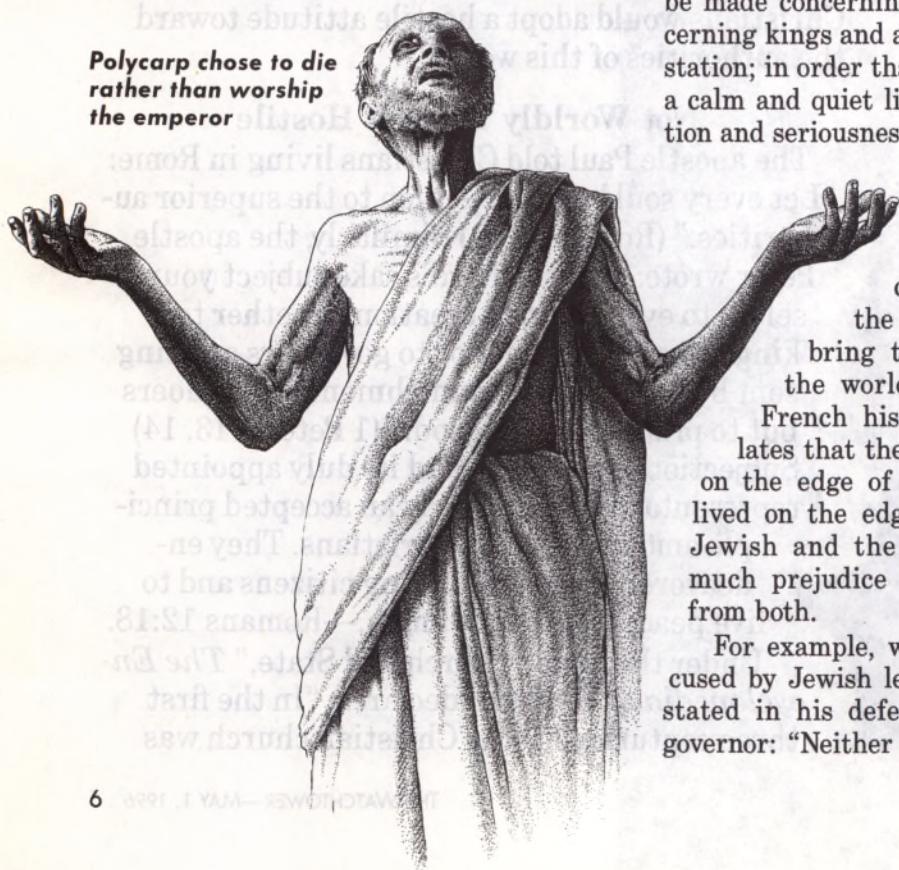
Musei Capitolini, Roma

largely isolated from official Roman society . . . Nevertheless, Christian leaders . . . taught obedience to Roman law and loyalty to the emperor, within the limits set by the Christian faith."

Honor, Not Worship

Christians were not hostile to the Roman emperor. They respected his authority and paid him the honor that was due his rank. During the rule of Emperor Nero, the apostle Peter wrote to Christians living in various parts of the Roman Empire: "Honor men of all sorts, . . . have honor for the king." (1 Peter 2:17) The word "king" was used in the Greek-speaking world not only for local kings but also for the Roman emperor. The apostle Paul counseled Christians living in the capital of the Roman Empire: "Render to all their dues, . . . to him who calls for honor, such honor." (Romans 13:7) The Ro-

Polycarp chose to die rather than worship the emperor



man emperor most certainly called for honor. In time, he even called for worship. Here, though, the early Christians drew the line.

At his trial before a Roman proconsul in the second century C.E., Polycarp reportedly declared: "I am a Christian. . . . We are taught to give all due honour . . . to the powers and authorities which are ordained of God." Polycarp chose, however, to die rather than worship the emperor. Second-century apologist Theophilus of Antioch wrote: "I will rather honor the emperor, not indeed worshipping him, but praying for him. But God, the living and true God I worship."

Appropriate prayers concerning the emperor were in no way connected with emperor worship or with nationalism. The apostle Paul explained their purpose: "I therefore exhort, first of all, that supplications, prayers, intercessions, offerings of thanks, be made concerning all sorts of men, concerning kings and all those who are in high station; in order that we may go on leading a calm and quiet life with full godly devotion and seriousness."—1 Timothy 2:1, 2.

"On the Edge of Society"

This respectful conduct on the part of the early Christians did not bring them the friendship of the world in which they lived.

French historian A. Hamman relates that the early Christians "lived on the edge of society." They actually lived on the edge of two societies, the Jewish and the Roman, encountering much prejudice and misunderstanding from both.

For example, when he was falsely accused by Jewish leaders, the apostle Paul stated in his defense before the Roman governor: "Neither against the Law of the

Jews nor against the temple nor against Caesar have I committed any sin. . . . I appeal to Caesar!" (Acts 25:8, 11) Conscious that the Jews were plotting to kill him, Paul appealed to Nero, thus recognizing the Roman emperor's authority. Subsequently, at his first trial in Rome, it appears that Paul was acquitted. But he was later imprisoned again, and tradition has it that he was executed at Nero's orders.

Concerning the difficult position of the early Christians in Roman society, sociologist and theologian Ernst Troeltsch wrote: "All offices and callings were barred which had any connection with idol-worship, or with the worship of the Emperor, or those which had anything to do with bloodshed or with capital punishment, or those which would bring Christians into contact with pagan immorality." Did this stance leave no place for a peaceful and mutually respectful relationship between Christians and the State?

Paying Caesar His "Dues"

Jesus provided a formula that would govern Christian conduct toward the Roman State or, for that matter, any other government, when he declared: "Pay back . . . Caesar's things to Caesar, but God's things to God." (Matthew 22:21) This counsel to Jesus' followers was in stark contrast with the attitude of many nationalistic Jews who resented Roman domination and contested the lawfulness of paying taxes to a foreign power.

Later, Paul told Christians living in Rome: "There is therefore compelling reason for



Early Christians were peaceful, honest, taxpaying citizens

you people to be in subjection, not only on account of that wrath but also on account of your conscience. For that is why you are also paying taxes; for they [governmental "superior authorities"] are God's public servants constantly serving this very purpose. Render to all their dues, to him who calls for the tax, the tax; to him who calls for the tribute, the tribute." (Romans 13:5-7) While Christians were no part of the world, they were duty-bound to be honest, tax-paying citizens, paying the State for services rendered.—John 17:16.

But are Jesus' words limited to paying taxes? Since Jesus did not define exactly

what is Caesar's and what is God's, there are borderline cases that must be decided according to the context or according to our understanding of the entire Bible. In other words, deciding what things a Christian can pay Caesar would sometimes involve the Christian's conscience, as enlightened by Bible principles.

A Careful Balance Between Two Competing Claims

Many people tend to forget that after stating that Caesar's things should be paid back to him, Jesus added: "But [pay back] God's things to God." The apostle Peter showed where the priority lies for Christians. Immediately after counseling submission to the "king," or emperor, and his "governors," Peter wrote: "Be as free people, and yet holding your freedom, not as a blind for badness, but as slaves of God. Honor men of all sorts, have love for the whole association of brothers, be in fear of God, have honor for the king." (1 Peter 2:16, 17) The apostle showed that Christians are slaves of God, not of a human ruler. While they should show proper honor and respect for representatives of the State, they are to do so in the fear of God, whose laws are supreme.

Years earlier Peter had left no doubt as to the preeminence of God's law over man's. The Jewish Sanhedrin was an administrative body to which the Romans had granted both civil and religious authority. When it ordered Jesus' followers to stop teaching in Christ's name, Peter and the other apostles replied respectfully but firmly: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men." (Acts 5:29) Clearly, the early Christians had to maintain a careful balance between obedience to God and proper submission to human authorities. Tertullian put it this way early in the third century C.E.: "If all is Caesar's, what will remain for God?"

Compromise With the State

As time went by, the position adopted by the first-century Christians in relation to the State gradually weakened. The apostasy foretold by Jesus and the apostles blossomed in the second and third centuries C.E. (Matthew 13:37, 38; Acts 20:29, 30; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; 2 Peter 2:1-3) Apostate Christianity made compromises with the Roman world, adopted its pagan festivals and its philosophy, and accepted not only civil service but also military service.

Professor Troeltsch wrote: "From the third century onwards the situation grew more difficult, for the Christians became more numerous in the higher ranks of Society and in the more eminent professions, in the army and in official circles. In several passages in the [non-Biblical] Christian writings there are indignant protests against participation in these things; on the other hand, we also find attempts to compromise—arguments designed to quiet uneasy consciences . . . From the time of Constantine these difficulties disappeared; friction between Christians and pagans ceased, and all offices in the State were thrown open."

Toward the end of the fourth century C.E., this adulterated, compromising form of Christianity became the State religion of the Roman Empire.

Throughout its history, Christendom—represented by the Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant Churches—has continued to compromise with the State, getting deeply involved in its politics and supporting it in its wars. Many sincere church members who have been shocked by this would doubtless be pleased to know that there are Christians today who hold to the position of the first-century Christians in their relationship with the State. The following two articles will discuss the matter in more detail.



GOD AND CAESAR

"By all means, then, pay back Caesar's things to Caesar, but God's things to God."—LUKE 20:25.

WHEN Jesus Christ gave that instruction, there was no doubt in his mind that God's claims on His servants take precedence over anything that Caesar, or the State, may require of them. Jesus knew better than anyone the truthfulness of the psalmist's prayer to Jehovah: "Your kingship is a kingship for all times indefinite, and your dominion [sovereignty]^{*} is through-

out all successive generations." (Psalm 145:13) When the Devil offered Jesus authority over all the kingdoms of the inhabited earth, Jesus replied: "It is written, 'It is Jehovah your God you must worship, and it is to him alone you must render sacred service.'" (Luke 4:5-8) Worship could never be given to "Caesar," whether Caesar is the Roman emperor, some other human ruler, or the State itself.

² Jesus did not deny that the kingdoms

1. (a) What is Jehovah's elevated position? (b) What do we owe to Jehovah that we can never give to Caesar?

* See Psalm 103:22, footnote.

2. (a) What is Satan's position relative to this world? (b) With whose permission does Satan occupy his position?

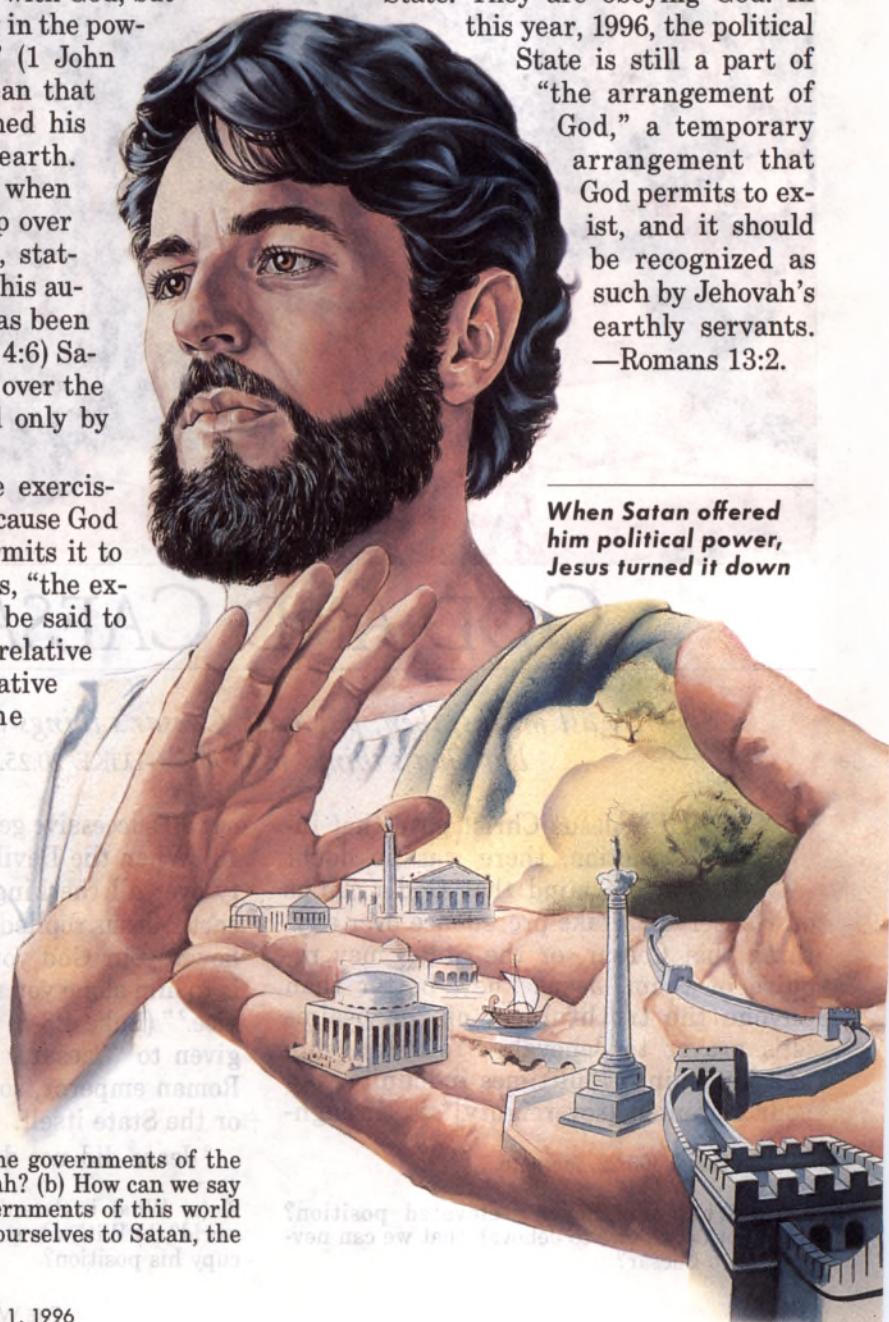
of the world were Satan's to give. Later, he called Satan "the ruler of this world." (John 12:31; 16:11) Toward the end of the first century C.E., the apostle John wrote: "We know we originate with God, but the whole world is lying in the power of the wicked one." (1 John 5:19) This does not mean that Jehovah has relinquished his sovereignty over the earth. Remember that Satan, when offering Jesus rulership over the political kingdoms, stated: "I will give you all this authority . . . because it has been delivered to me." (Luke 4:6) Satan exercises authority over the kingdoms of the world only by God's permission.

³ Similarly, the State exercises its authority only because God as Sovereign Ruler permits it to do so. (John 19:11) Thus, "the existing authorities" can be said to "stand placed in their relative positions by God." Relative to Jehovah's supreme sovereign authority, theirs is by far a lesser authority. However, they are "God's minister," "God's public servants," in that they provide necessary services, maintain law and order, and punish evildoers. (Romans 13:1, 4, 6) So Christians need to understand

that just because Satan is the invisible ruler of this world, or system, they are not subjecting themselves to him when they recognize their relative subjection to the State. They are obeying God. In this year, 1996, the political State is still a part of "the arrangement of God," a temporary arrangement that God permits to exist, and it should be recognized as such by Jehovah's earthly servants.

—Romans 13:2.

When Satan offered him political power, Jesus turned it down



3. (a) What position do the governments of the nations hold before Jehovah? (b) How can we say that subjection to the governments of this world does not mean subjecting ourselves to Satan, the god of this world?

Jehovah's Servants of Old and the State

⁴ In pre-Christian times, Jehovah permitted some of his servants to occupy prominent positions in State governments. For example, in the 18th century B.C.E., Joseph became prime minister of Egypt, second only to the reigning Pharaoh. (Genesis 41:39-43) Subsequent events made it evident that Jehovah maneuvered this so that Joseph could serve as an instrument in preserving the 'seed of Abraham,' his descendants, for the outworking of His purposes. Of course, it should be borne in mind that Joseph was sold into slavery in Egypt, and he lived at a time when God's servants had neither the Mosaic Law nor "the law of the Christ."—Genesis 15:5-7; 50:19-21; Galatians 6:2.

⁵ Centuries later the faithful prophet Jeremiah was inspired by Jehovah to tell Jewish exiles to submit to the rulers when in exile in Babylon and even to pray for the peace of that city. In his letter to them, he wrote: "This is what Jehovah of armies, the God of Israel, has said to all the exiled people, . . . 'Seek the peace of the city to which I have caused you to go into exile, and pray in its behalf to Jehovah, for in its peace there will prove to be peace for you yourselves.'" (Jeremiah 29:4, 7) At all times Jehovah's people have reason to "seek peace" for themselves and the nation where they live, in order to have freedom to worship Jehovah.—1 Peter 3:11.

⁶ During the Babylonian exile, Daniel

4. Why did Jehovah allow Joseph to become prominent in the government of Egypt?
5. Why were Jewish exiles commanded to "seek the peace" of Babylon?
6. Although given high governmental positions, in what ways did Daniel and his three companions refuse to compromise with regard to Jehovah's Law?

and three other faithful Jews who were captives in slavery to Babylon submitted to State training and became high-ranking civil servants in Babylonia. (Daniel 1:3-7; 2:48, 49) However, even during their training, they took a firm position on dietary matters that could have led them to break the Law that their God, Jehovah, had provided through Moses. For this they were blessed. (Daniel 1:8-17) When King Nebuchadnezzar set up a State image, Daniel's three Hebrew companions apparently were compelled to attend the ceremony with their fellow State administrators. Nevertheless, they refused to "fall down and worship" the State idol. Again, Jehovah rewarded their integrity. (Daniel 3:1-6, 13-28) Similarly today, Jehovah's Witnesses respect the flag of the nation in which they live, but they will not perform an act of worship toward it.—Exodus 20:4, 5; 1 John 5:21.

⁷ After the fall of the Neo-Babylonian dynasty, Daniel was given a high-ranking governmental post under the new Medo-Persian regime that replaced it in Babylon. (Daniel 5:30, 31; 6:1-3) But he did not allow his high position to lead him into compromising his integrity. When a State law required that he worship King Darius rather than Jehovah, he refused. For this he was thrown to the lions, but Jehovah delivered him. (Daniel 6:4-24) Of course, this was in pre-Christian times. Once the Christian congregation was established, God's servants came "under law toward Christ." Many things that were permitted under the Jewish system were to be viewed differently, based on the way in which Jehovah

7. (a) What fine stand did Daniel take, despite having an elevated position in Babylon's governmental structure? (b) What changes came about in Christian times?

was now dealing with his people.—1 Corinthians 9:21; Matthew 5:31, 32; 19:3-9.

Jesus' Attitude Toward the State

⁸ When Jesus Christ was on earth, he set higher standards for his followers, and he refused all involvement in political or military matters. After Jesus had miraculously fed several thousand people with a few loaves of bread and two small fish, Jewish men wanted to seize him and make him a political king. But Jesus avoided them by quickly withdrawing to the mountains. (John 6:5-15) Regarding this incident, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* states: “There were fierce nationalistic longings among the Jews of that period, and doubtless many of those who saw the miracle felt that here was a divinely accredited leader, who was just the one to lead them against the Romans. So they set themselves to make him king.” It adds that Jesus “decisively rejected” this offer of political leadership. Christ gave no support to any Jewish insurrection against Roman domination. Indeed, he foretold what would be the result of the revolt that would take place after his death—untold woes for the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the destruction of that city. —Luke 21:20-24.

⁹ Shortly before his death, Jesus told the special representative of the Roman emperor in Judea: “My kingdom is no part of this world. If my kingdom were part of this world, my attendants would have fought that I should not be delivered up to the Jews. But, as it is, my kingdom is not from

8. What incident shows that Jesus was determined to avoid political involvement?

9. (a) How did Jesus describe the relationship of his Kingdom to the world? (b) What guidance did Jesus give his followers as to their dealings with the governments of the world?

this source.” (John 18:36) Until his Kingdom puts an end to the rule of political governments, Christ’s disciples follow his example. They render obedience to those established authorities but do not interfere in their political undertakings. (Daniel 2:44; Matthew 4:8-10) Jesus left guidelines for his disciples, stating: “Pay back, therefore, Caesar’s things to Caesar, but God’s things to God.” (Matthew 22:21) Earlier, in his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus had said: “If someone under authority impresses you into service for a mile, go with him two miles.” (Matthew 5:41) In the context of this sermon, Jesus was illustrating the principle of willing submission to legitimate demands, whether in human relations or in governmental requirements that are in harmony with God’s law.—Luke 6: 27-31; John 17:14, 15.

Christians and Caesar

¹⁰ These brief guidelines were to govern the relationship between Christians and the State. In his book *The Rise of Christianity*, historian E. W. Barnes wrote: “Whenever, for centuries to come, a Christian was in doubt as to his duty towards the State, he turned to Christ’s authoritative teaching. He would pay taxes: the dues levied might be heavy—they became intolerable before the collapse of the Western Empire—but the Christian would endure them. He would likewise accept all other State obligations, provided he was not called upon to render unto Caesar the things that belonged to God.”

¹¹ It was in line with this that, a lit-

10. According to one historian, what conscientious position did the early Christians hold with regard to Caesar?

11. How did Paul counsel Christians to deal with worldly rulers?

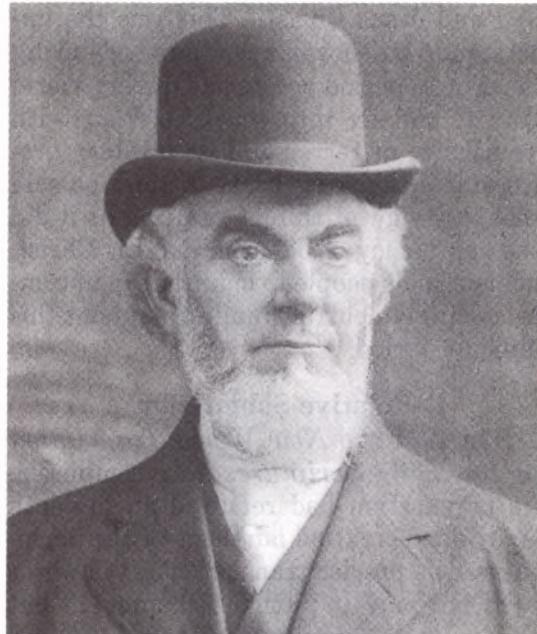
*Russell wrote that true Christians
"should be found amongst the most
law-abiding of the present time"*

tle over 20 years after Christ's death, the apostle Paul told the Christians in Rome: "Let every soul be in subjection to the superior authorities." (Romans 13:1) About ten years later, shortly before his second imprisonment and his execution in Rome, Paul wrote to Titus: "Continue reminding them [Cretan Christians] to be in subjection and be obedient to governments and authorities as rulers, to be ready for every good work, to speak injuriously of no one, not to be belligerent, to be reasonable, exhibiting all mildness toward all men."—Titus 3:1, 2.

Progressive Understanding of "the Superior Authorities"

¹² As early as 1886, Charles Taze Russell wrote in the book *The Plan of the Ages*: "Neither Jesus nor the Apostles interfered with earthly rulers in any way. . . . They taught the Church to obey the laws, and to respect those in authority because of their office, . . . to pay their appointed taxes, and except where they conflict with God's laws (Acts 4:19; 5:29) to offer no resistance to any established law. (Rom. 13:1-7; Matt. 22:21) Jesus and the Apostles and the early church were all law-abiding, though they were separate from, and took no share in the governments of this world." This book correctly identified "the higher powers," or "the superior authorities," mentioned by the apostle Paul, as human governmental authorities. (Ro-

12. (a) What did Charles Taze Russell view as the proper position of a Christian relative to the governmental authorities? (b) Regarding serving in the armed forces, what varied positions did anointed Christians take during World War I?



mans 13:1, King James Version) In 1904 the book *The New Creation* stated that true Christians "should be found amongst the most law-abiding of the present time—not agitators, not quarrelsome, not fault-finders." This was understood by some to mean total submission to the powers that be, even to the point of accepting service in the armed forces during World War I. Others, however, viewed it as contrary to Jesus' statement: "All those who take the sword will perish by the sword." (Matthew 26:52) Obviously, a clearer understanding of Christian submission to the superior authorities was needed.

¹³ In 1929, at a time when laws of various governments were beginning to forbid things that God commands or demand things that God's laws forbid, it was felt that the higher powers must be Jehovah

13. What change in understanding of the identity of the higher powers was presented in 1929, and how did this prove beneficial?

God and Jesus Christ.* This was the understanding Jehovah's servants had during the crucial period before and during World War II and on into the Cold War, with its balance of terror and its military preparedness. Looking back, it must be said that this view of things, exalting as it did the supremacy of Jehovah and his Christ, helped God's people to maintain an uncompromisingly neutral stand throughout this difficult period.

Relative Submission

¹⁴ In 1961 the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* was completed. Its preparation had required an in-depth study of the textual language of the Scriptures. The precise translation of the words used not only in Romans chapter 13 but also in such passages as Titus 3:1, 2 and 1 Peter 2:13, 17 made it evident that the

* *The Watchtower*, June 1 and 15, 1929.

14. How was increased light shed on Romans 13:1, 2 and related scriptures in 1962?

Can You Explain?

- Why does subjection to the superior authorities not mean subjection to Satan?
- What was Jesus' attitude toward the politics of his day?
- What counsel did Jesus give his followers as to their dealings with Caesar?
- How did Paul counsel Christians to deal with the rulers of the nations?
- How has the understanding of the identity of the superior authorities developed over the years?

term "superior authorities" referred, not to the *Supreme Authority*, Jehovah, and to his Son, Jesus, but to *human governmental authorities*. In late 1962, articles were published in *The Watchtower* that gave an accurate explanation of Romans chapter 13 and also provided a clearer view than that held at the time of C. T. Russell. These articles pointed out that Christian subjection to the authorities cannot be total. It must be *relative*, subject to its not bringing God's servants into conflict with God's laws. Further articles in *The Watchtower* have emphasized this important point.*

¹⁵ This key to the correct understanding of Romans chapter 13 has enabled Jehovah's people to balance due respect for the political authorities with an uncompromising stand on vital Scriptural principles. (Psalm 97:11; Jeremiah 3:15) It has allowed them to have a proper view of their relationship with God and their dealings with the State. It has ensured that while they pay back Caesar's things to Caesar, they do not neglect to pay back God's things to God.

¹⁶ But just what are Caesar's things? What legitimate claims can the State make on a Christian? These questions will be considered in the following article.

* See *The Watchtower*, November 1 and 15, December 1, 1962; November 1, 1990; February 1, 1993; July 1, 1994.

Interestingly, in his commentary on Romans chapter 13, Professor F. F. Bruce writes: "It is plain from the immediate context, as from the general context of the apostolic writings, that the state can rightly command obedience only within the limits of the purposes for which it has been divinely instituted—in particular, the state not only may but must be resisted when it demands the allegiance due to God alone."

15, 16. (a) What better balance did the new understanding of Romans chapter 13 lead to? (b) What questions remain to be answered?

PAYING BACK CAESAR'S THINGS TO CAESAR

"Render to all their dues."—ROMANS 13:7.

ACCORDING to Jesus, there are things we owe to God and things we owe to Caesar, or the State. Jesus said: "Pay back Caesar's things to Caesar, but God's things to God." In these few words, he confounded his enemies and neatly summed up the balanced attitude we must have in our relationship with God and in our dealings with the State. No wonder that his listeners "began to marvel at him!"—Mark 12:17.

² Of course, the first concern of Jehovah's servants is that they pay back God's things to God. (Psalm 116:12-14) In doing so, however, they do not forget that Jesus said that they must render certain things to Caesar. Their Bible-trained consciences require that they consider prayerfully to what extent they can pay back what Caesar calls for. (Romans 13:7) In modern times, many jurists have recognized that governmental power has limits and that people and governments everywhere are bound by natural law.

³ The apostle Paul referred to this natural law when he wrote about people of the world: "What may be known about God is manifest among them, for God made it manifest to them. For his invisible qualities

1, 2. (a) According to Jesus, how should Christians balance their obligations to God and to Caesar? (b) What is the first concern of Jehovah's Witnesses?

3, 4. What interesting comments have been made about natural law, revealed law, and human law?

are clearly seen from the world's creation onward, because they are perceived by the things made, even his eternal power and Godship, so that they are inexcusable." If they will respond to it, natural law will even move the consciences of these unbelievers. Thus, Paul further said: "Whenever people of the nations that do not have law do by nature the things of the law, these people, although not having law, are a law to themselves. They are the very ones who demonstrate the matter of the law to be written in their hearts, while their conscience is bearing witness with them."—Romans 1:19, 20; 2:14, 15.

⁴ In the 18th century, the renowned English jurist William Blackstone wrote: "This law of nature [natural law], being co-eval with [the same age as] mankind and dictated by God himself, is of course superior in obligation to any other. It is binding over all the globe, in all countries, and at all times: no human laws are of any validity, if contrary to this." Blackstone went on to speak of "revealed law," as found in the Bible, and he commented: "Upon these two foundations, the law of nature and the law of revelation, depend all human laws; that is to say, no human laws should be suffered [allowed] to contradict these." This is in harmony with what Jesus said about God and Caesar, as recorded at Mark 12:17. Clearly, there are areas where God limits what Caesar can require of a Christian. The Sanhedrin strayed into just such an area

The apostles told the Sanhedrin: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men"

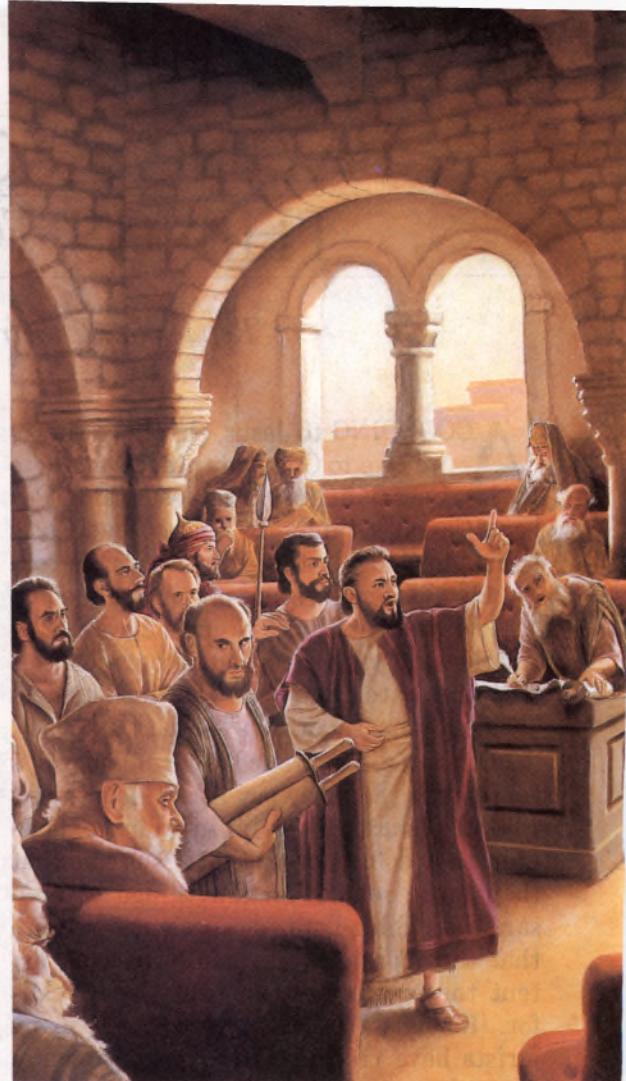
when they commanded the apostles to stop preaching about Jesus. Hence, the apostles correctly responded: "We must obey God as ruler rather than men."—Acts 5:28, 29.

"God's Things"

⁵ Especially since 1914, when Jehovah God, the Almighty, began ruling as king through Christ's Messianic Kingdom, have Christians had to be sure not to give God's things to Caesar. (Revelation 11:15, 17) As never before, God's law now calls on Christians to be "no part of the world." (John 17:16) Being dedicated to God, their Life-Giver, they must demonstrate clearly that they no longer belong to themselves. (Psalm 100:2, 3) As Paul wrote, "we belong to Jehovah." (Romans 14:8) Moreover, at a Christian's baptism, he is ordained as a minister of God, so that he can say with Paul: "God . . . has indeed adequately qualified us to be ministers."—2 Corinthians 3:5, 6.

⁶ The apostle Paul also wrote: "I glorify my ministry." (Romans 11:13) Surely we should do likewise. Whether we share in the ministry full-time or part-time, we keep in mind that Jehovah himself assigned us to our ministry. (2 Corinthians 2:17) Since some may challenge our position, every dedicated, baptized Christian must be ready to furnish clear and positive proof that he truly is a minister of the good news. (1 Peter 3:15) His ministry should also be evidenced in his conduct. As a minister of God, a Christian should advocate and practice clean morals, uphold family unity, be honest, and show respect for law and order. (Romans 12:17, 18; 1 Thessalonians 5:15) A Chris-

5, 6. (a) In view of the Kingdom's birth in 1914, what should Christians bear more closely in mind? (b) How does a Christian give evidence that he is a minister?



tian's relationship with God and his divinely assigned ministry are the most important things in his life. He cannot give these up at the behest of Caesar. Clearly, they are to be counted among "God's things."

"Caesar's Things"

⁷ Jehovah's Witnesses know that they owe "subjection to the superior authorities," the governmental rulers. (Romans 13:1) Hence, when Caesar, the State, makes legitimate

7. What is the reputation of Jehovah's Witnesses as to paying taxes?



demands, their Bible-trained consciences allow them to satisfy these demands. For example, true Christians are among the most exemplary taxpayers on earth. In Germany the newspaper *Münchener Merkur* said of Jehovah's Witnesses: "They are the most honest and the most punctual tax payers in the Federal Republic." In Italy the newspaper *La Stampa* observed: "They [Jehovah's Witnesses] are the most loyal citizens anyone could wish for: they do not dodge taxes or seek to evade inconvenient laws for their own profit." Jehovah's servants do this

'on account of their consciences.'—Romans 13:5, 6.

⁸ Are "Caesar's things" limited to paying taxes? No. Paul listed other things, such as fear and honor. In his *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Gospel of Matthew*, German scholar Heinrich Meyer wrote: "By [Caesar's things] . . . we are not to understand merely the *civil tax*, but everything to which Caesar was entitled in virtue of his legitimate rule." Historian E. W. Barnes, in his work *The Rise of Christianity*, observed that a Christian would pay taxes if he owed them and "likewise accept all other State obligations, provided he was not called upon to render unto Caesar the things that belonged to God."

⁹ What things might the State require without encroaching on the things that rightfully belong to God? Some have felt that they could legitimately give Caesar money in the form of taxes but nothing else. They certainly would not feel comfortable giving Caesar anything that might take up time that could be used for theocratic activities. Nevertheless, while it is true that we should 'love Jehovah our God with our whole heart, soul, mind, and strength,' Jehovah does expect us to spend time in things other than our sacred service. (Mark 12:30; Philippians 3:3) For example, a married Christian is counseled to devote time to pleasing his or her marriage mate. Such activities are not bad, but the apostle Paul states that they are "the things of the world" not "the things of the Lord."—1 Corinthians 7:32-34; compare 1 Timothy 5:8.

¹⁰ Further, Christ authorized his followers to "pay back" taxes, and this certainly

8. Is what we owe to Caesar limited to monetary taxes?

9, 10. What hesitation might a Christian have about paying back Caesar his due, but what facts should be kept in mind?

involves using time that is dedicated to Jehovah—since our entire lives are dedicated in this way. If the average taxation in a country is 33 percent of income (it is higher in some countries), this means that each year the average worker pays to the State Treasury four months' worth of his earnings. Put another way, at the end of his working life, the average worker will have spent about 15 years earning the tax money that "Caesar" requires. Consider, too, the matter of schooling. In most countries the law requires that parents have their children attend school for a minimum number of years. The number of years of schooling varies from country to country. In most places it is a substantial length of time. True, such schooling is usually beneficial, but it is Caesar who decides what portion of a child's life must be spent in this way, and Christian parents comply with Caesar's decision.

Compulsory Military Service

¹¹ Another demand made by Caesar in some countries is compulsory military service. In the 20th century, this arrangement has been instituted by most nations in times of war and by some in times of peace as well. In France this obligation was for many years called blood tax, meaning that every young man had to be willing to lay down his life for the State. Is this something that those dedicated to Jehovah can conscientiously render? How did the first-century Christians view this matter?

¹² While the earliest Christians endeavored to be good citizens, their faith prevented them from taking the life of another or from sacrificing their own lives for the State. *The Encyclopedia of Religion*

11, 12. (a) What demand does Caesar make in many lands? (b) How did the early Christians view military service?

states: "The early church fathers, including Tertullian and Origen, affirmed that Christians were constrained from taking human life, a principle that prevented them from participating in the Roman army." In his book *The Early Church and the World*, Professor C. J. Cadoux writes: "Up to the reign of Marcus Aurelius at least [161-180 C.E.], no Christian would become a soldier after his baptism."

¹³ Why do members of the churches of Christendom not view things this way today? Because of a radical change that took place in the fourth century. The Catholic work *A History of the Christian Councils* explains: "Many Christians, . . . under the pagan emperors, had religious scruples with regard to military service, and positively refused to take arms, or else deserted. The Synod [of Arles, held in 314 C.E.], in considering the changes introduced by Constantine, set forth the obligation that Christians have to serve in war, . . . because the Church is at peace (*in pace*) under a prince friendly to Christians." As a result of this abandonment of Jesus' teachings, from that time until now, the clergy of Christendom have encouraged their flocks to serve in the armies of the nations, although some individuals have taken a stand as conscientious objectors.

¹⁴ Are Christians today obliged to follow the majority in this matter? No. If a dedicated, baptized Christian lives in a country where exemption from military service is granted to ministers of religion, he may avail himself of this provision, for he is in

13. Why do most in Christendom not view military service as the early Christians did?

14, 15. (a) On what grounds do Christians in some places claim exemption from military service? (b) Where exemption is not available, what Scriptural principles will help a Christian to make a correct decision in the matter of military service?

fact a minister. (2 Timothy 4:5) A number of countries, including the United States and Australia, have granted such exemption even in wartime. And during peacetime, in many lands that maintain compulsory military service, Jehovah's Witnesses, as ministers of religion, are granted exemption. Thus they can continue helping the people by their public service.

¹⁵ What, though, if the Christian lives in a land where exemption is not granted to ministers of religion? Then he will have to make a personal decision following his Bible-trained conscience. (Galatians 6:5) While taking the authority of Caesar into account, he will weigh carefully what he owes to Jehovah. (Psalm 36:9; 116:12-14; Acts 17:28) The Christian will remember that the mark of a true Christian is love for all his fellow believers, even those who live in other lands or those belonging to other tribes. (John 13:34, 35; 1 Peter 2:17) Further, he will not forget the Scriptural principles found in texts such as Isaiah 2:2-4; Matthew 26:52; Romans 12:18; 14:19; 2 Corinthians 10:4; and Hebrews 12:14.

Civilian Service

¹⁶ However, there are lands where the State, while not allowing exemption for ministers of religion, nevertheless acknowledges that some individuals may object to military service. Many of these lands make provision for such conscientious individuals not to be forced into military service. In some places a required civilian service, such as useful work in the community, is regarded as nonmilitary national service. Could a dedicated Christian undertake such service? Here again, a dedicated, baptized Christian would have to make his own decision on the basis of his Bible-trained conscience.

16. In some lands, what nonmilitary service does Caesar demand of those who do not accept military service?

¹⁷ It seems that compulsory service was practiced in Bible times. One history book states: "In addition to the taxes and dues exacted from the inhabitants of Judea, there was also a corvée [unpaid labor exacted by public authorities]. This was an ancient institution in the East, which the Hellenistic and Roman authorities continued to maintain. . . . The New Testament, too, cites examples of corvée in Judea, showing how widespread it was. In accordance with this custom, the soldiers pressed Simon of Cyrene into carrying Jesus' cross [torture stake] (Matthew 5:41; 27:32; Mark 15:21; Luke 23:26)."

¹⁸ Similarly, citizens in some countries today are required by the State or by local authorities to participate in various forms of community service. Sometimes this is for a

17. Is there a Biblical precedent for nonmilitary civilian service?

18. With what nonmilitary, nonreligious types of community service do Jehovah's Witnesses frequently cooperate?

Can You Explain?

- In balancing his relationships with Caesar and Jehovah, what is a Christian's first concern?
- What do we owe to Jehovah that we can never give to Caesar?
- What are some things that we properly give back to Caesar?
- What scriptures help us to make a correct decision in the matter of compulsory military service?
- What are some things to keep in mind if we are called for nonmilitary national civilian service?
- Regarding Jehovah and Caesar, what do we keep on doing?

specific task, such as digging wells or building roads; sometimes it is on a regular basis, such as weekly participation in cleaning up roads, schools, or hospitals. Where such civilian service is for the good of the community and is not connected with false religion or is not in some other way objectionable to the consciences of Jehovah's Witnesses, they have often complied. (1 Peter 2:13-15) This has usually resulted in an excellent witness and has sometimes silenced those who falsely accuse the Witnesses of being antigovernment.—Compare Matthew 10:18.

¹⁹ What, though, if the State requires a Christian for a period of time to perform civilian service that is a part of national service under a civilian administration? Here again, Christians must make their own decision based on an informed conscience. "We shall all stand before the judgment seat of God." (Romans 14:10) Christians faced with a requirement of Caesar should prayerfully study the matter and meditate on it.* It may also be wise to talk the matter over with mature Christians in the congregation. After this a personal decision must be made.—Proverbs 2:1-5; Philippians 4:5.

²⁰ While engaged in such research, Christians would consider a number of Bible principles. Paul said that we must "be obedient to governments and authorities as rulers, . . . be ready for every good work . . . be reasonable, exhibiting all mildness toward all men." (Titus 3:1, 2) At the same time, Christians would do well to examine the proposed civilian work. If they accept it, will they be able to maintain Christian neutral-

* See *The Watchtower* of May 15, 1964, page 308, paragraph 21.

19. How should a Christian approach the matter if Caesar asks him to perform nonmilitary national service for a period of time?

20. What questions and Scriptural principles help a Christian to reason on the matter of non-military national civilian service?

ity? (Micah 4:3, 5; John 17:16) Would it involve them with some false religion? (Revelation 18:4, 20, 21) Would performing it prevent or unreasonably limit them from fulfilling their Christian responsibilities? (Matthew 24:14; Hebrews 10:24, 25) On the other hand, would they be able to continue to make spiritual progress, perhaps even sharing in the full-time ministry while performing the required service?—Hebrews 6:11, 12.

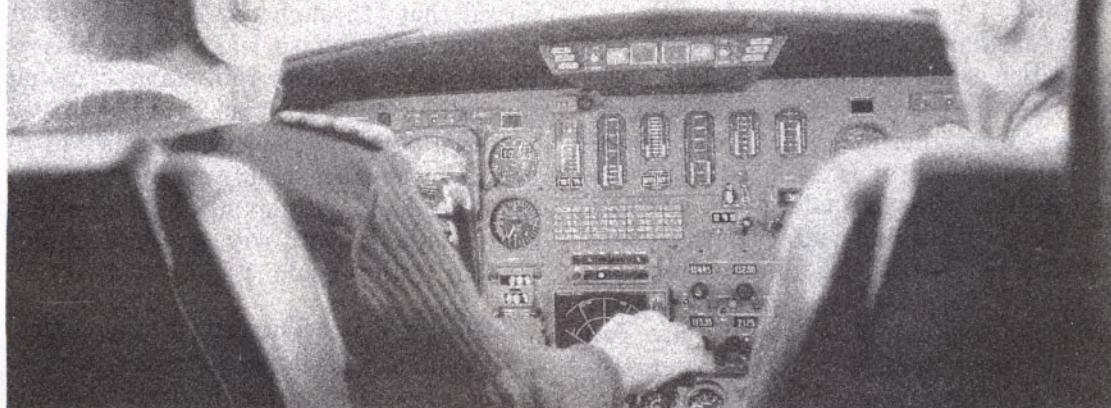
²¹ What if the Christian's honest answers to such questions lead him to conclude that the national civilian service is a "good work" that he can perform in obedience to the authorities? That is his decision before Jehovah. Appointed elders and others should fully respect the conscience of the brother and continue to regard him as a Christian in good standing. If, however, a Christian feels that he cannot perform this civilian service, his position should also be respected. He too remains in good standing and should receive loving support.—1 Corinthians 10:29; 2 Corinthians 1:24; 1 Peter 3:16.

²² As Christians we will not cease to render "to him who calls for honor, such honor." (Romans 13:7) We will respect good order and seek to be peaceful, law-abiding citizens. (Psalm 34:14) We may even pray "concerning kings and all those who are in high station" when these men are called upon to make decisions that affect our Christian life and work. As a result of our paying back Caesar's things to Caesar, we hope that "we may go on leading a calm and quiet life with full godly devotion and seriousness." (1 Timothy 2:1, 2) Above all, we will continue to preach the good news of the Kingdom as mankind's only hope, conscientiously paying back God's things to God.

21. Whatever his decision, how should the congregation view a brother who is handling the matter of nonmilitary national civilian service?

22. Whatever situation faces us, what will we continue to do?

Maintain Your Confidence Firm to the End



IMAGINE a small plane flying into difficult weather conditions. The pilot can no longer make out landmarks. Thick clouds envelop him. He cannot see beyond his windscreen, yet he feels sure that he can complete his journey safely. What is the reason for his confidence?

He has accurate instruments that enable him to fly through clouds and land in darkness. Along his route, especially near the airport, beacons guide him electronically, and he has radio contact with air-traffic controllers on the ground.

In a comparable way, we can face the future with confidence, even though world conditions get gloomier day by day. Our journey through this wicked system may be taking longer than some expected, but we can be confident that we are on course and on time. Why can we be so sure? Because we have guidance that enables us to detect what human vision cannot.

God's Word is a 'light to our roadway,' and it is "trustworthy, making the inexpe-

rienced one wise." (Psalm 19:7; 119:105) Like beacons that indicate the pilot's flight path, the Bible accurately outlines future events and gives us clear instructions in order to ensure that we arrive safely at our destination. To benefit from divine guidance, however, we must trust it.

In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul urged Jewish Christians to 'make fast their hold on the confidence they had at the beginning firm to the end.' (Hebrews 3:14) Trust may be shaken if our hold on it is not 'made fast.' So the question arises, How can we sustain our confidence in Jehovah firm to the end?

Exercise Your Faith

Before a pilot can fly blind, depending totally on his instruments and ground control, he needs adequate training and many hours of flying time. Similarly, a Christian needs to exercise his faith continually so as to maintain his confidence in Jehovah's guidance, especially when difficult circumstances arise. The apostle Paul wrote: "Because

we have the same spirit of faith as that of which it is written: 'I exercised faith, therefore I spoke,' we too exercise faith and therefore we speak." (2 Corinthians 4:13) Thus, when we speak about the good news of God, we are exercising and fortifying our faith.

Magdalena, who spent four years in a concentration camp during the second world war, explains the value of the preaching activity: "My mother taught me that to maintain strong faith, it is essential to be concerned about the spiritual welfare of others. I remember one incident that illustrates how we felt. After our release from Ravensbrück concentration camp, my mother and I reached our home on a Friday. Two days later, on Sunday, we joined the brothers in preaching from house to house. I firmly believe that if we concentrate on helping others to trust in God's promises, those same promises will become more real to us." —Compare Acts 5:42.

Maintaining our confidence firm to the end requires spiritual activity in other fields. Personal study is another splendid faith-strengthening exercise. If we imitate the Bereans and industriously examine the Scriptures daily, it will help us "to have the full assurance of the hope down to the end." (Hebrews 6:11; Acts 17:11) True, person-

al study requires time and determination. Possibly, that is why Paul warned the Hebrews about the danger of being "sluggish," or slothful, in such matters.—Hebrews 6:12.

A slothful attitude may have dire consequences in many areas of life. Solomon observed that "through the letting down of the hands the house leaks." (Ecclesiastes 10:18) Sooner or later rain starts dripping through a roof that is not cared for. If we let down our hands spiritually and fail to maintain our faith, doubts may creep in. On the other hand, regular meditation on and study of God's Word will nourish and protect our faith.—Psalm 1:2, 3.

Building Trust Through Experience

Of course, a pilot learns through experience as well as through study that his instruments are trustworthy. Likewise, our confidence in Jehovah grows when we in our own lives see evidence of his loving care. Joshua experienced that, and he reminded his fellow Israelites: "You well know with all your hearts and with all your souls that not one word out of all the good words that Jehovah your God has spoken to you has failed. They have all come true for you." —Joshua 23:14.

Josefina, a married sister from the Philippines, learned the same lesson. She explains what life was like before she knew the truth: "My husband used to drink a lot, and when he got drunk, he would get angry and hit me. Our unhappy marriage was also affecting our son. My husband and I were both working, earning quite good money, but we gambled away most of our wages. My husband had many friends, yet most of them sought his friendship so that he would pay for the drinks, and some even tried to get him drunk just to laugh at him."

"Things changed when we got to know Jehovah and took his counsel to heart. My

In Our Next Issue

You Can Find True Security

Devote Yourself to Reading

Jonah Learns

About Jehovah's Mercy

husband no longer drinks, we have stopped gambling, and we have true friends who love and help us. Our marriage is a happy one, and our son is growing into a fine young man. We work fewer hours, but we have more money. Experience has taught us that Jehovah is like a loving Father, who always leads us in the right direction."

As a result of radioed instructions or an instrument check, pilots sometimes realize that they need to correct their course. We may likewise have to change direction according to Jehovah's instruction. "Your own ears will hear a word behind you saying: 'This is the way. Walk in it, you people,' in case you people should go to the right or in case you should go to the left." (Isaiah 30:21) Through his Word and through his organization, we receive counsel alerting us to spiritual dangers. One of these concerns associations.

Associations Can Blow Us Off Course

A small plane can easily be blown off course if needed corrections are not made. Likewise, outside influences constantly buffet Christians today. We live in a fleshly-minded world where many scoff at spiritual values, attaching much more importance to money and pleasure. Paul warned Timothy that the last days would be "hard to deal with." (2 Timothy 3:1-5) Teenagers, who yearn for acceptance and popularity, are especially vulnerable to bad associations.—2 Timothy 2:22.

Amanda, who is 17 years of age, explains: "For a while my faith was weakened to a certain extent by my classmates. They kept saying that my religion was restrictive and unreasonable, and this began to discourage me. My parents, however, helped me to understand that Christian guidelines serve to protect rather than restrict. Now I realize that these principles are helping me to

have a more satisfying life than that of my former school companions. I have learned to trust the ones who really care for me—my parents and Jehovah—and I am enjoying pioneer service."

Whichever age-group we belong to, we will encounter people who make disparaging remarks about our beliefs. They may appear sophisticated, but to God they are physical, unspiritual. (1 Corinthians 2:14) An influential group in the Corinth of Paul's day were the worldly-wise Skeptics. The teachings of these philosophers likely led some Corinthian Christians to lose faith in the resurrection hope. (1 Corinthians 15:12) "Do not be misled," warned the apostle Paul. "Bad associations spoil useful habits." —1 Corinthians 15:33.

On the other hand, good associations strengthen us spiritually. Within the Christian congregation, we have the opportunity to mingle with people who live a life of faith. Norman, a brother who learned the truth in 1939, is still a source of great encouragement to all. What has kept his spiritual perspective sharp? "Meetings and close friendships with faithful brothers are vital," he replies. "This sort of association has helped me to see clearly the difference between God's organization and Satan's."

The Deceptive Power of Riches

Brian, an experienced pilot, explains that "a pilot sometimes may find it difficult to believe his instruments—simply because his instincts disagree. Experienced military pilots have been known to fly upside down because lights on the ground looked just like stars—even though *their instruments told them otherwise.*"

Similarly, our selfish instincts can mislead us in a spiritual sense. Jesus said that riches have "deceptive power," and Paul warned that 'the love of money has led

many away from the faith.'—Mark 4:19; 1 Timothy 6:10.

Like deceptive twinkling lights, glitzy material goals can point us in the wrong direction. Rather than rejoicing in the "expectation of things hoped for," we can get sidetracked by the showy display of the world that is passing away. (Hebrews 11:1; 1 John 2:16, 17) If we are "determined" to have an affluent life-style, we will likely have little time left for spiritual growth.—1 Timothy 6:9; Matthew 6:24; Hebrews 13:5.

A young married man named Patrick admitted that he and his wife sacrificed spiritual goals for the sake of enjoying a better standard of living. He explains: "We were influenced by those in the congregation with big cars and luxurious homes. Though we never lost sight of the Kingdom hope, we felt that we might as well be comfortable along the way. In time, however, we realized that true happiness comes through serving Jehovah and from growing spiritually. Now our lives once again are simple. We have reduced our working hours, and we have become regular pioneers."

Faith Depends Upon a Receptive Heart

A receptive heart also plays an important role in building confidence in Jehovah. True, "faith is the assured expectation of things hoped for, the evident demonstration [or, "convincing evidence," footnote] of realities though not beheld." (Hebrews 11:1) But unless we have a receptive heart, it is unlikely that we will be convinced. (Proverbs 18:15; Matthew 5:6) For this reason the apostle Paul said that "faith is not a possession of all people."—2 Thessalonians 3:2.

How, then, can we keep our hearts responsive to all the convincing evidence available? By cultivating godly qualities, qualities that enrich and stimulate faith. Peter urges us to

'supply to our faith virtue, knowledge, self-control, endurance, godly devotion, brotherly affection, and love.' (2 Peter 1:5-7; Galatians 5:22, 23) On the other hand, if we lead a self-centered life or render Jehovah only token service, we cannot reasonably expect our faith to grow.

Ezra "prepared his heart" to read Jehovah's Word and to put it into practice. (Ezra 7:10) Micah likewise had a receptive heart. "As for me, it is for Jehovah that I shall keep on the lookout. I will show a waiting attitude for the God of my salvation. My God will hear me."—Micah 7:7.

Magdalena, quoted earlier, also waits patiently for Jehovah. (Habakkuk 2:3) She says: "We already have the spiritual paradise. The second step, the physical Paradise, will come soon enough. In the meantime hundreds of thousands are joining the great crowd. It thrills me to see so many flocking to God's organization."

Looking to the God of Our Salvation

Maintaining our confidence firm to the end requires exercising our faith and listening carefully to the guidance we receive from Jehovah and his organization. It is certainly worth the effort. A pilot feels deep satisfaction when after a long, difficult journey, he descends and finally breaks through the thick clouds. There spread out before him lies the earth—green and welcoming. The airport runway is below, waiting to receive him.

A thrilling experience awaits us too. This gloomy, wicked world will give way to a new earth of righteousness. A divine welcome awaits us. We can arrive there if we heed the words of the psalmist: "You are my hope, O Sovereign Lord Jehovah, my confidence from my youth. . . . In you my praise is constantly."—Psalm 71:5, 6.

SERVING UNDER JEHOVAH'S LOVING HAND

AS TOLD BY LAMBROS ZOUMBOS

I faced a crucial choice: accept the offer of my rich uncle to become the manager of his extensive real-estate holdings—thereby solving the financial problems of my family—or become a full-time minister of Jehovah God. Let me explain what factors shaped the decision I finally made.

I WAS born in the town of Volos, Greece, in 1919. My father sold menswear, and we enjoyed material prosperity. But as a result of the economic depression of the late 1920's, Father was forced into bankruptcy and lost his store. I felt sad every time I saw the desperate look on my father's face.

For a while my family lived in sheer poverty. Every day I took an hour off from school to wait in line for food rations. Still, despite our poverty we enjoyed a calm family life. It was my dream to become a doctor, but in my mid-teens I had to quit school and start working in order to help my family survive.

Then, during World War II, the Germans and the Italians occupied Greece, and there was severe famine. I often saw friends and acquaintances dying of starvation in the streets—a horrible sight that I will never forget! Once, our family went 40 days



without bread, a staple food in Greece. To survive, my elder brother and I went to nearby villages and obtained potatoes from friends and relatives.

An Illness Becomes a Blessing

Early in 1944, I became very ill with a form of pleurisy. During my three-month stay in the hospital, a cousin brought me two booklets and said: "Read these; I am sure you will like them." The booklets, *Who Is God?* and *Protection*, were published by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. After reading them, I shared their contents with fellow patients.

Upon leaving the hospital, I started associating with the Volos Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. For a month, though, I was confined to my house as an outpatient, and from six to eight hours a day, I read early issues of *The Watchtower*, as well as other publications published by the Watch Tower



Lambros Zoumbos and his wife, Niki

Society. As a result, my spiritual growth was quite rapid.

Near Escapes

One day in mid-1944, I was sitting on a park bench in Volos. Suddenly a paramilitary group that supported the German occupation army surrounded the place and arrested everyone present. About two dozen of us were led through the streets to the Gestapo headquarters, located in a tobacco storage house.

After a few minutes, I heard someone calling my name and the name of the person with whom I had been talking in the park. A Greek army officer summoned us and told us that when one of my relatives saw us being escorted away by soldiers, he told him that we were Jehovah's Witnesses. The Greek officer then said that we were free to go home, and he gave us his official card to use in case we were arrested again.

The following day we learned that the Germans had executed most of those arrested as a reprisal for the killing of two German soldiers by Greek resistance fight-

ers. Besides possibly being delivered from death, I learned on that occasion the value of Christian neutrality.

In the fall of 1944, I symbolized my dedication to Jehovah by water baptism. During the following summer, the Witnesses made arrangements for me to associate with the Sklithro Congregation up in the mountains, where I could fully regain my health. The civil strife that followed the end of the German oc-

cupation was then raging in Greece. It happened that the village where I was staying served as a sort of base for guerrilla forces. The local priest and another vicious man accused me of spying for governmental forces and had me interrogated by a self-appointed guerrilla martial court.

Present at the mock court trial was the leader of the guerrilla forces of the area. When I finished explaining the reason why I was staying in the village and showing that as a Christian, I was completely neutral in the civil strife, the leader told the others: "If anybody touches this fellow, he will have to deal with me!"

Later I returned to my hometown of Volos even stronger in my faith than in my physical health.

Spiritual Progress

Soon afterward I was appointed the accounts servant in the local congregation. Despite the hardships created by the civil war—including the numerous arrests because of clergy-inspired charges of proselytism—sharing in the Christian ministry

brought me and the rest of our congregation great joy.

Then, early in 1947, we received a visit from a traveling overseer of Jehovah's Witnesses. This was the first such visit following World War II. At that time our thriving congregation in Volos was divided to make two, and I was appointed presiding overseer of one of the congregations. Paramilitary and nationalistic organizations were then spreading fear among the people. The clergy took advantage of the situation. They turned the authorities against Jehovah's Witnesses by spreading the false rumor that we were Communists or supporters of leftist groups.

Arrests and Imprisonments

During 1947, I was arrested about ten times and had three court trials. Each time I was acquitted. In the spring of 1948, I was sentenced to four months' imprisonment for proselytism. I served the time in the Volos prison. In the meantime the number of Kingdom proclaimers in our congregation doubled, and joy and happiness filled the hearts of the brothers.

In October 1948, while I was having a meeting with six others who were taking the lead in our congregation, five policemen burst into the house and arrested us at gunpoint. They took us to the police station without explaining the reason for the arrest, and there we were beaten. I was pummeled in the face by a policeman who had been a boxer. Then we were thrown into a cell.

Afterward the officer in charge called me into his office. When I opened the door, he threw at me an ink bottle, which missed its mark and broke on the wall. He did this to try to intimidate me. He then presented me with a piece of paper and a pen and ordered: "Write down the names of all of Jehovah's

Witnesses in Volos, and bring me the list in the morning. If you don't, you know what is in store for you!"

I didn't answer, but upon my return to the cell, the rest of the brothers and I prayed to Jehovah. I wrote only my own name on the paper and waited to be called. But I heard nothing further from the officer. During the night, opposing military forces had come, and he had led his men against them. In the skirmish that followed, he was seriously injured, and one of his legs had to be amputated. Eventually, our case came to trial, and we were charged with holding an illegal meeting. All seven of us were sentenced to five years in prison.

Since I refused to attend Sunday Mass in prison, I was sent to solitary confinement. On the third day, I asked to speak with the prison director. "With all due respect," I said to him, "it seems senseless to punish someone who is willing to spend five years in prison for his faith." He thought seriously about that, and finally he said: "As of tomorrow, you will be working here next to me in my office."

Eventually, I received work as a doctor's assistant in prison. As a result, I learned a lot about health care, something that has proved very useful in later years. While in prison, I had many opportunities to preach, and three persons responded and became Jehovah's Witnesses.

After serving almost four years in prison, I was finally released on probation in 1952. Later, I had to appear in court in Corinth on the neutrality issue. (Isaiah 2:4) There I was held for a short time in a military prison, and another round of abuse began. Certain officers were quite innovative with their threats, saying: "I will extract your heart in pieces with a dagger," or, "Do not count on a quick death with only six bullets."

A Different Sort of Test

Soon, however, I was back home, serving again with the Volos Congregation and working part-time secularly. One day, I received a letter from the Watch Tower Society's branch office in Athens, inviting me to receive training for two weeks and then begin visiting congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses as a circuit overseer. At the same time, a paternal uncle, who was childless and had extensive real-estate holdings, asked me to manage his assets. My family was still living in poverty, and this employment would have solved their economic problems.

I visited my uncle to express my gratitude for his offer, but I informed him that I had decided to accept a special assignment in the Christian ministry. At that he rose, gave me a sober glance, and abruptly left the room. He returned with a generous gift of money that could support my family for some months. He said: "Take this, and do as you like with it." Until this day, I cannot describe the feelings I had at that moment. It was as if I heard the voice of Jehovah telling me, 'You made the right choice. I am with you.'

With my family's blessing, I left for Athens in December 1953. Although only my mother became a Witness, the other members of my family did not oppose my Christian activity. When I went to the branch office in Athens, another surprise awaited me. There was a telegram from my sister, announcing that Father's two-year struggle to secure a welfare pension had on that day reached a successful outcome. What more could I ask for? I felt as if I had wings, ready to fly high in Jehovah's service!

Exercising Caution

In my early years in the circuit work, I had to be very careful because Jehovah's

Witnesses were being severely persecuted by the religious and political authorities. To visit our Christian brothers, particularly those who lived in small towns and villages, I walked many hours under the cover of darkness. The brothers, who had risked arrest, gathered and waited patiently at a house for my arrival. What a fine interchange of encouragement those visits provided for all of us!—Romans 1:11, 12.

To avoid detection, I at times used disguises. Once, I dressed like a shepherd in order to pass a roadblock to reach a gathering of brothers who sorely needed spiritual shepherding. On another occasion, in 1955, a fellow Witness and I pretended to be sellers of garlic to avoid arousing the suspicion of the police. Our assignment was to contact some Christian brothers who had become inactive in the small town of Árgos Orestikón.

We laid our merchandise out in the town's public market. However, a young policeman patrolling the area became suspicious, and each time he passed, he stared curiously at us. Finally, he said to me: "You don't look like a seller of garlic." At that moment, three young women approached and expressed interest in buying some garlic. Pointing to my products, I exclaimed: "This young policeman eats garlic like this, and look at how strong and handsome he is!" The women looked at the policeman and laughed. He too smiled and then disappeared.

When he left I seized the opportunity to go to the store where our spiritual brothers worked as tailors. I asked one of them to sew on a button that I had torn from my jacket. While he did this, I leaned over and whispered: "I have come from the branch office to see you." At first the brothers were afraid, since they had not had contact with fellow Witnesses for years. I encouraged

them as best I could and made arrangements to meet them later in the town's cemetery to talk further. Happily, the visit was encouraging, and they again became zealous in the Christian ministry.

Gaining a Faithful Partner

In 1956, three years after beginning the traveling work, I met Niki, a young Christian woman who had great love for the preaching work and desired to spend her life in the full-time ministry. We fell in love and were married in June 1957. I was wondering if Niki would be able to meet the demands of the traveling work under the hostile conditions that then prevailed for Jehovah's Witnesses in Greece. With Jehovah's help she managed, thus becoming the first woman to accompany her husband in the circuit work in Greece.

We continued together in the traveling work for ten years, serving most of the congregations in Greece. Many a time we wore disguises and, with suitcase in hand, walked under cover of darkness for hours on end to reach a congregation. Despite the great opposition we often faced, we were thrilled to see firsthand the spectacular growth in the number of Witnesses.

Bethel Service

In January 1967, Niki and I were invited to serve at Bethel, as the branch office of Jehovah's Witnesses is called. The invitation took both of us by surprise, but we accepted it, confident that Jehovah was directing matters. As time passed, we came to appreciate what a great privilege it is to serve at this center of theocratic activity.

Three months after we entered Bethel service, a military junta seized power, and Jehovah's Witnesses had to continue their work in a less visible manner. We began meeting in small groups, held our assem-

blies in the woods, preached discreetly, and printed and distributed Bible literature secretly. It was not difficult to adapt to these circumstances, since we simply revived the methods of carrying on our activities that we had used in years past. Despite the restrictions, the number of Witnesses increased from fewer than 11,000 in 1967 to more than 17,000 in 1974.

After nearly 30 years in Bethel service, Niki and I continue to enjoy our spiritual blessings, despite health and age limitations. For over ten years, we lived at the branch premises located on Kartali Street in Athens. In 1979 a new branch was dedicated in Marousi, a suburb of Athens. But since 1991 we have enjoyed the spacious new branch facilities in Eleona, 40 miles north of Athens. Here I serve in our Bethel infirmary, where the training I received as an assistant to the prison doctor has proved very useful.

During my well over four decades in the full-time ministry, I, like Jeremiah, have come to realize the truth of Jehovah's promise: "They will be certain to fight against you, but they will not prevail against you, for 'I am with you,' is the utterance of Jehovah, 'to deliver you.'" (Jeremiah 1:19) Yes, Niki and I have enjoyed a cup overflowing with blessings from Jehovah. We constantly rejoice in his abundant loving concern and undeserved kindness.

My encouragement to young ones in Jehovah's organization is to pursue the full-time ministry. In this way they can accept Jehovah's invitation to test whether he will be true to his promise 'to open the flood-gates of the heavens and actually empty out a blessing until there is no more want.' (Malachi 3:10) From my own experience, I can assure you young ones that Jehovah will indeed bless all of you who thus trust fully in him.

KINGDOM PROCLAIMERS REPORT

The Transforming Power of God's Word

BY HIS own admission, he used to be "a blasphemer and a persecutor and an insolent man." (1 Timothy 1:13) But he changed! The apostle Paul's transformation was so great that he was later able to declare: "Become imitators of me, even as I am of Christ."—1 Corinthians 11:1.

Today, hundreds of thousands of sincere worshipers all over the world are making similar changes. What enables them to do so? They are taking in knowledge of God's Word and are applying it to their lives. The following experience highlights the transforming power of God's Word.

In Slovenia an older couple lived alone outside a village. The husband, Jože, was about 60 years of age and had a severe problem with alcoholism. Still, he took care of his sick wife, Ljudmila. One day Jože was approached by two Kingdom proclaimers. He invited the Witnesses into his home, where they met his wife. Upon hearing the Kingdom message, tears of joy streamed down Ljudmila's face. Jože too enjoyed what he heard and asked many questions. After placing some Bible literature with the couple, the Witnesses left.

One month later the Witnesses were able to return, and they noticed the book *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth* sitting on the table. When asked where he got it from, Jože said: "I saw an advertisement on the back page of one of the magazines that you left with me. So I wrote your office in Zagreb and requested the book." In view of his interest, he was invited to attend the upcoming Memorial of Christ's death that was to be held at the Kingdom Hall. To the Witnesses' joy, he showed up!

Soon a Bible study was started, and good progress was made. For example, when Jože

was shown from the Bible that "you must not make for yourself a carved image or . . . bow down to them nor be induced to serve them," he promptly gathered up all the religious images that were in the house, including pictures, and threw them away.—Exodus 20:4, 5.

Jože's thirst for spiritual truth was being satisfied. Unfortunately, though, he still had another thirst. For some 18 years, he had consumed about seven quarts of wine each day. Because of his drinking problem, he did not pay much attention to his personal appearance. But after learning God's view of the misuse of alcohol, he was determined to change.

He endeavored to overcome his drinking problem gradually, keeping track of how much he was drinking on a daily basis. Soon he was no longer enslaved to wine. In the course of his Bible studies, he also learned that true Christians are required to maintain good personal hygiene. Hence, he gave money to the Witnesses and said: "Well, go and buy whatever clothing items I need to be presentable at Christian meetings and in field service!" The Witnesses returned with underwear, socks, shoes, shirts, suits, ties, and a briefcase.

After studying the Bible for one year, Jože and Ljudmila qualified to accompany the Witnesses in the house-to-house preaching work. Three months later they symbolized their dedication to God by water baptism at a district convention of Jehovah's Witnesses. Despite old age and poor health, Jože shared regularly in preaching the good news and later, until his death in May of 1995, faithfully served as a ministerial servant in the congregation. The positive fruitage produced in the lives of this humble man and his wife gives testimony to the transforming power of God's Word!

QUESTIONS FROM READERS

What did the apostle Paul mean when he said that he was "forgetting the things behind and stretching forward to the things ahead"? (Philippians 3:13) Can a person deliberately forget something?

No, in most cases we cannot deliberately remove a memory from our mind. The fact is, we forget much that we would like to remember and remember many things that we would sooner forget. What, then, did Paul mean when he penned the words of Philippians 3:13? The context helps us to understand.

In Philippians chapter 3, Paul describes his "grounds for confidence . . . in the flesh." He speaks of his impeccable Jewish background and his zeal for the Law—things that could have given him many advantages in the nation of Israel. (Philippians 3:4-6; Acts 22:3-5) Still, he turned his back on such advantages, writing them off as a loss, as it were. Why? Because he had found something better—"the excelling value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus."—Philippians 3:7, 8.

Paul's major goal was to attain, not a position in this world, but "the earlier resurrection from the dead." (Philippians 3:11, 12) Thus, he writes: "Forgetting the things behind and stretching forward to the things ahead, I am pursuing down toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God by means of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13, 14) When Paul said that he was "forgetting the things behind," he did not mean that he had somehow erased "the things behind" from his mind. He evidently still remembered them, since he had just listed them. Besides, in the original Greek, he uses a form of the verb indicating an action in progress, not completed. He says "forgetting," not "having forgotten."

The Greek word translated "forget" (*e-pi-lan-thano-mai*) has different shades of meaning, one of which is "be unconcerned about," or "neglect." According to the Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (edited by Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider), this is what "forgetting" means at Philippians 3:13. Paul did not constantly think of the things he had given up. He had learned to view them as of little concern. They were as "a lot of

refuse" compared with the heavenly hope.—Philippians 3:8.

How can Paul's words apply today? Well, a Christian may, like Paul, have made sacrifices to serve God. He may have given up a lucrative career for the full-time service. Or he may belong to a wealthy family that has cut him off financially because they disapprove of the truth. Such sacrifices are commendable, but they are not something to be constantly dwelt on. A Christian 'forgets,' ceases to be concerned about, "the things behind" in view of the glorious future that awaits him.—Luke 9:62.

The principle behind Paul's words can perhaps be applied in another way. What of a Christian who engaged in wrong conduct before learning about God? (Colossians 3:5-7) Or suppose that after becoming a Christian, he committed a serious sin and was disciplined by the congregation. (2 Corinthians 7:8-13; James 5:15-20) Well, if he is truly repentant and has changed his ways, he has been "washed clean." (1 Corinthians 6:9-11) What happened is past. He may never literally forget what he did—indeed, he would be wise to learn from the experience so as not to repeat the sin. Still, he 'forgets' in the sense of not constantly berating himself. (Compare Isaiah 65:17.) Having been forgiven on the basis of Jesus' sacrifice, he strives to put the past behind him.

At Philippians 3:13, 14, Paul describes himself as a runner in a race, "stretching forward" to reach the goal. A runner looks forward, not back. Likewise, a Christian should look to the blessings ahead, not to the things left behind. Paul also says: "If you are mentally inclined otherwise in any respect, God will reveal the above attitude to you." (Philippians 3:15) Hence, pray to God to help you cultivate this point of view. Fill your mind with God's thoughts as found in the Bible. (Philippians 4:6-9) Meditate on Jehovah's love for you and on the blessings you enjoy because of it. (1 John 4:9, 10, 17-19) Then, through holy spirit Jehovah will help you not to be concerned about what you left behind. Rather, like Paul, you will look to the glorious future ahead.—Philippians 3:17.

1996

"MESSENGERS OF GODLY PEACE" CONVENTION



IN ANCIENT times Jehovah's people celebrated three major festivals annually. Rather similarly, in modern times Jehovah's name people meet three times a year for festive occasions. They enjoy gathering for the one-day special assembly day, the two-day circuit assembly, and the three- or four-day district convention. This year, the theme of the district convention is "Messengers of Godly Peace."

How fitting that theme is! Our God, Jehovah, is "the God of peace," yes, "the God who gives peace." Our Leader, Jesus Christ, is the "Prince of Peace," and the message

that servants of Jehovah bring is a message of godly peace. (Philippians 4:9; Romans 15:33; Isaiah 9:6; Nahum 1:15)