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### **Apostates**

#### **The Watchtower, August 1, 1980, p. 19**

“Thus, the one who doubts to the point of becoming an apostate sets himself up as a judge. He thinks he knows better than his fellow Christians, better also than the ‘faithful and discreet slave,’ through whom he has learned the best part, if not all that he knows about Jehovah God and his purposes.”

#### **The Watchtower, March 15, 1986, p. 12**

“Do you wisely destroy apostate material?”

#### **The Watchtower, March 15, 1986, p. 14**

“Why is reading apostate publications similar to reading pornographic literature?”

#### **The Watchtower, March 15, 1986, p. 17**

“Beware of those who try to put forward their own contrary opinions.”

(done)

<sup>8</sup> But other scriptures make it clear that even during "the last days" of the present system of things, cases of apostasy would occur within the true Christian congregation. The apostle Peter wrote:

"In the last days there will come ridiculers with their ridicule, proceeding according to their own desires and saying: 'Where is this promised presence of his?' . . . You, therefore, beloved ones, having this advance knowledge, be on your guard that you may not be led away with them by the error of the law-defying people and fall from your own steadfastness."—2 Pet. 3:3, 4, 17.

<sup>9</sup> Peter was not merely warning his brothers against "ridiculers" and "law-defying people" in the world. Christians have always been well aware of danger from that quarter. Peter was also speaking of the danger of being "led away" by some within the Christian congregation who would become "ridiculers," making light of the fulfillment of prophecies concerning Christ's "presence" and adopting a law-defying attitude toward "the faithful and discreet slave," the Governing Body of the Christian congregation and the appointed elders.

8, 9. (a) What warning did Peter give concerning the last days? (b) Would these "ridiculers" and "law-defying people" be exclusively outside the Christian congregation?

## Causes and Effects of Apostasy

<sup>10</sup> Among the various causes of apostasy, one of the foremost is unquestionably a *lack of faith* through doubt. (Heb. 3:12) Interestingly, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* supplies the following information on the Greek verb that is often translated by "to doubt": "*Diakrinō*, make a distinction, judge, . . . ; doubt, waver. . . . In some [New Testament] passages doubt appears as a lack of faith and thus as sin (Rom. 14:23). . . . In Rom. 4:20f. doubt comes close to disbelief. . . . Doubt is thus a lack of trust in the act of God which he has still to perform and which men are to await. . . . In the NT the doubter sins against God and his promises, because he judges God falsely."

<sup>11</sup> Thus, the one who doubts to the point of becoming an apostate sets himself up as a judge. He thinks he knows better than his fellow Christians, better also than the "faithful and discreet slave," through whom he has learned the best part, if not all that he knows about Jehovah God and his purposes. He develops a *spirit of in-*

10, 11. (a) What is one important cause of apostasy? (b) What are some parallel meanings of the Greek word translated "to doubt," and how does the apostate set himself up as a judge?

### CAUSES

Lack of faith  
 Spirit of independence  
 Ingratitude  
 Presumption

### EFFECTS

Loss of joy  
 Rebelliousness  
 Lack of spiritual nourishment  
 Works of the flesh



**Do you wisely destroy  
apostate material?**

<sup>6</sup> The apostle Paul expressed this concern: "I am afraid that somehow, as the serpent seduced Eve by its cunning, your minds might be corrupted away from the sincerity and the chastity that are due the Christ." (2 Corinthians 11:3) Paul found it necessary to write regarding some erroneous teachings that were circulating in his day. In his second letter to the congregation at Thessalonica, he wrote: "We request of you *not to be quickly shaken from your reason* nor to be excited either through an inspired expression or through a verbal message or through a letter as though from us, to the effect that the day of Jehovah is here. Let no one seduce you in any manner."—2 Thessalonians 2: 1-3.

6. (a) What concern did Paul express regarding some in the Corinthian congregation? (b) How was this same concern reflected in what was written to the congregation in Thessalonica?

**Have No Dealings With Apostates**

<sup>7</sup> Now, what will you do if you are confronted with apostate teaching—subtle reasonings—claiming that what you believe as one of Jehovah's Witnesses is not the truth? For example, what will you do if you receive a letter or some literature, open it, and see right away that it is from an apostate? Will curiosity cause you to read it, just to see what he has to say? You may even reason: 'It won't affect me; I'm too strong in the truth. And, besides, if we have the truth, we have nothing to fear. The truth will stand the test.' In thinking this way, some have fed their minds upon apostate reasoning and have fallen prey to serious questioning and doubt. (Compare James 1:5-8.) So remember the warning at 1 Corinthians 10:12: "Let him that thinks he is standing beware that he does not fall."

<sup>8</sup> With loving help from caring brothers, some having doubts sown by apostates have recovered after a period of spiritual turmoil and trauma. But this pain could have been avoided. At Proverbs 11:9 we are told: "By his mouth the one who is an apostate brings his fellowman to ruin, but by knowledge are the righteous rescued." Jude told fellow Christians to "continue showing mercy to some that have doubts; save them by snatching them out of the fire." (Jude 22, 23) Paul advised the overseer Timothy to instruct "with mildness those not favorably disposed; as perhaps God may give them repentance leading to an accurate knowledge of truth, and they may come back to their proper senses out from the snare of the Devil, seeing that they have been caught alive by him for the will of that one."—2 Timothy 2:25, 26.

7. (a) What questions arise if apostate literature is received by mail? (b) As regards safeguarding oneself from the influence of apostates, why is overconfidence dangerous?

8. What assistance is needed by some who have been overcome by doubts?

### Do You Recall?

- How might we lose the benefits of Jehovah's spiritual paradise?
- Why is reading apostate publications similar to reading pornographic literature?
- What can be done if we are asked about certain claims of apostates?
- Why are apostate teachings like gangrene?

to read a book or a pamphlet that is filled with slander and half-truths in order to refute the false claims and teachings of opposers.

### Confidence in Jehovah

<sup>14</sup> As we go forward, building faith and keeping busy in Kingdom service, we can confidently put our trust in Jehovah, knowing that, as our loving heavenly Father, he wants the very best for us. God teaches us; he warns us. He does this through his Word and by means of clear direction provided by his visible organization. If we were to ask a loving parent for bread and fish, he would not give us a stone or a serpent. Neither will God fool us or deceive us. (Matthew 7:7-11) Yet, God will not completely shield us from temptations or even deceptive lies and devilish propaganda. He says of himself: "I, Jehovah, am your God, the One teaching you to benefit yourself, the One causing you to tread in the way in which you should walk." (Isaiah 48:17) Yes, Jehovah 'teaches us to benefit ourselves.' He tells us to keep separate from apostates and their teaching, and this for our own protection. It means our life.

14. What loving concern does our heavenly Father have for us, and why can we put our complete confidence in him?

<sup>15</sup> The apostle Paul warned fellow Christian elders: "From among you yourselves men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves." (Acts 20:30) If we keep listening to subtle arguments and specious reasoning, "twisted things" can sound as though they were straight. The longer Eve looked at the forbidden fruit and listened to the twisted reasoning of the Devil, the more she was convinced that he was right. Paul warned: "Look out: perhaps there may be someone who will carry you off as his prey through the philosophy and empty deception according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary things of the world and not according to Christ." (Colossians 2:8) The apostle also indicated that "by smooth talk and complimentary speech [apostates] seduce the hearts of guileless ones." (Romans 16:17, 18; compare 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.) Of course, the fact that a few are drawn away by that kind of propaganda does not mean that we have to follow them. Nevertheless, we need to be continually alert.

<sup>16</sup> The Devil's tactics have not changed since Eden. He uses subtle questioning and an appeal to self-interest. Peter wrote: "There will also be false teachers among you. These very ones will quietly bring in destructive sects . . . Also, with covetousness they will exploit you with counterfeit words." (2 Peter 2:1-3) Something counterfeit is designed to look or sound genuine. At 2 Timothy 2:14-19, Paul stressed the importance of using Jehovah's Word to set matters straight but warned of the need to avoid apostates, whose 'empty speeches violate what is

15. What warnings did the apostle Paul give regarding some who would try to draw away disciples?

16. Application of what Scriptural warnings will help us to withstand Satan's efforts to deceive and lead people away from true worship?

one." Do not let pride or a feeling of self-importance ever cause you to totter from standing solidly in the faith.—Luke 9:48; 1 Peter 5:9.

<sup>6</sup> Impatience is another thing looked for by the Devil. We may sometimes feel that changes should be made; we want quick action, immediate answers. "This problem must be cleared up now, or I quit. I've got to have the answer to this question right now, or I'm not going any further. Armageddon and the new system have been "right around the corner" for years now. I'm tired of waiting.' Be assured that the Devil is ready to sow seeds of doubt and revolt in such fields of impatience. Endurance and faith are needed.—Hebrews 10:36, 39.

<sup>7</sup> James said: "Let endurance have its work complete, that you may be complete and sound in all respects, not lacking in anything. So, if any one of you is lacking in wisdom, let him keep on asking God, for he gives generously to all and without reproaching; and it will be given him. But let him keep on asking in faith, not doubting at all, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven by the wind and blown about. In fact, let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from Jehovah: he is an indecisive man, unsteady in all his ways." (James 1:4-8) Do not let the Devil make you a candidate for apostasy because you have become demandingly impatient, doubtful about the promises of God! Be patient, be thankful. Wait upon Jehovah.—Psalm 42:5.

<sup>8</sup> What else does the Devil use in trying to turn us away? Has he not always tried to stir up rebellion, to cause Jehovah's

6, 7. (a) What are some manifestations of impatience that the Devil is quick to exploit? (b) If one is lacking in wisdom, what should be done? 8. How does the tendency to rebel against authority open the way for the Devil to entice a person to throw off Scriptural restraints?



*Pride can lead to a fall from which one might not recover*

servants to become critical of those taking the lead? "The elders just do not understand. They are too critical, too demanding," some may say. A person may go further and claim that the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses or other responsible brothers interfere with freedom of conscience and the individual's "right" to interpret the Scriptures. But remember Joseph's humble words: "Do not interpretations belong to God?" (Genesis 40:8) And did not Jesus foretell that in these final days an organization of anointed ones, "the faithful and discreet slave," would be entrusted with providing spiritual food at the proper time? (Matthew 24:45-47) Beware of those who try to put forward their own contrary opinions. Also beware of those who want to throw off all restraints or who promise freedom, claiming that Jehovah's Witnesses are slaves! Peter said of false teachers: "While they are promising them freedom, they themselves are existing as slaves of corruption. For whoever