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Former member of the
Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses

IN SEARCH OF CHRISTIAN FREEDOM

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Abbreviations of Bible translations referred to in this book:

ASV	American Standard Version
AV	Authorized (King James) Version
JB	The Jerusalem Bible
LB	The Living Bible
NAB	New American Bible
NEB	The New English Bible
NIV	The New International Version
NRSV	The New Revised Standard Version
NW	The New World Translation
PME	Phillips Modern English
RSV	The Revised Standard Version
TEV	Today's English Version

Wherever possible, and for the sake of authenticity, an effort has been made within this book to present quotations from other publications by direct photocopies. Since certain of these publications may go back as far as ninety years in the past, the quality of the type may not always be of the highest standard.

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Foreword

SEVERAL YEARS have passed since my resignation from the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, the body which directs and controls internationally the worship and, to a remarkable degree, the thoughts, speech and very lives of the millions of members of that religious movement. The events leading up to that resignation and the subsequent events that produced my excommunication from the movement are already detailed in an earlier work, *Crisis of Conscience*. That book, in its original 1983 edition, ended with these words:

> I am grateful to have been able to make available information that I feel others have a right to hear. There is much more that could be said, perhaps that needs to be said to give a complete picture. But whether time, life and circumstances allow for saying it or not, I am content to let the results of what has now been said rest in God's hands.

I was then 61 years of age. In the two decades that have passed, I have received thousands of letters and telephone calls from every part of the earth. Many of those communicating were former Witnesses, nearly as many were still associated with the organization. They represented virtually the entire range of organizational levels. The communications have come from persons who had held or, in some cases, were yet holding such positions as pioneer, special pioneer, missionary, ministerial servant, elder, city overseer, circuit overseer, district overseer, and branch coordinator. Several hundred of those writing or phoning had at one time been members of the Watch Tower headquarters staff in Brooklyn, or of the

staffs of its branch offices in other countries, or had served as foreign missionaries. In what follows, I will quote from a few of the letters received. The purpose is not for self-commendation, but to show the concerns expressed, what kind of approach appealed to those writing, and the heart qualities this revealed about the persons themselves.

The expressions as a whole made plain that the information supplied in *Crisis of Conscience* had filled a particular need. The discussions of the Governing Body, its doctrinal and decision-making processes, and the method of development of the written material on which all members feed are all shrouded in a cloak of secrecy. Many Witnesses, including elders and others in positions of responsibility, felt serious concerns, but found it difficult to "put all the pieces together." *Crisis of Conscience* supplied facts previously inaccessible to them. These evidently served as a "catalyst" bringing together the elements of the problems they had discerned within the organization and helping them understand why those problems existed. The information had the result of freeing them from a false sense of guilt created by the concept that their service to God must be through an organization, that is, specifically through the Watch Tower organization. It served to dispel the feeling of being cut off from God solely because of being cut off by, or having separated from, that organization.

Illustrating this is a letter from a man in Australia who, together with his wife, had spent forty very active years with the Watch Tower organization and because of being unable to accept certain of the organization's dogma and policies was pronounced "disassociated" in 1984. He wrote:

> I have been requested by family members to write to express their deep gratitude for the tremendous help *Crisis of Conscience* has given us all in clarifying and broadening our understanding of issues which have caused us concern and distress over many years. For holding views which were tolerant of our position [as no longer associated with the organization], my son and his wife were disfellowshiped from the movement in 1986. . . .
>
> This book has made a major contribution in holding us together as a family during the worst crisis of our lives which began with our alienation from the movement, and has helped us to stand on our own feet in the spiritual sense and make moral decisions based on our own integrity instead of that of the movement's policies.

A young woman who had spent many years as a full-time "pioneer" and had later been a Watch Tower headquarters staff member, reveals the difficulty that transition from being a devoted "organization member" to living in a truly personal relationship with God can bring. Writing from Pennsylvania, she says:

> Your account of what transpired organizationally as well as personally was not only an eye and heart opener for me, but also confirmed much of what I have felt throughout the years. . . .
>
> Before reading your book I was not aware of the great influence the organization had in my own life, even during the time of my [subsequent] disassociation. Before, I felt so lost, so unworthy of anymore having a personal relationship with Jehovah and Christ Jesus because I no longer had the organization. Now for the first time in a very, very long time I feel free to worship Jehovah through Jesus apart from the organization. I can now approach Jehovah in prayer and be his Servant. The tears flowed from my eyes and the ache has finally been lifted from my heart.

Her following paragraph contains complimentary remarks about the way book was written. In harmony with what I stated earlier, I include it for only one reason and that is because it illustrates something that has been true of so many of those writing—that they are not in favor of vindictive literature against Jehovah's Witnesses and that, rather than animosity, they retain an affection toward those still in that organization. Her letter continues:

> I was very much impressed with the manner in which you wrote your book. The love you had and still have for the brotherhood comes through. Your expressions were not bitter or vindictive, but merely presented the facts as kindly and lovingly as was possible. During my association with the organization I met some truly wonderful, extraordinary people and many of my experiences were memorable and happy. Much of what I have been taught through the organization is Bible-based and still imbedded deep in my mind and heart. For these things I have great appreciation. However, I too have seen and felt the effects in my own life and that of others when organizational laws dictate to people's conscience thereby superceding the Bible. This concept has played havoc with the lives of men, women and children alike.

A letter from another woman, writing from the midwestern part of the United States, illustrates some of the "havoc" experienced:

> I left the organization in 1980, although I just merely didn't go to meetings. Wouldn't you know, it couldn't be just that. My mother wrote a letter to me in '81 stating that she could no longer associate or socialize with me because I did not attend meetings. Of course, my brothers followed suit.
>
> Our daughter was killed in January 1983. Mother did not come to the funeral and sent no condolences. I am raising my daughter's four children and have learned the hard way who my true friends are. People that I did not even know expressed sympathy and helped me with the children. They gave money, time and anything they could to help. I felt so humbled to think I had turned my back for so many years on [non-Witness] neighbors and relatives who were so willing to help us. They never stopped loving me. I can't tell you the times I cried over the many years I wasted shunning them as "worldlings."
>
> I was baptized in 1946 and about 1971 I started to realize things weren't appearing very Christian. I searched the Scriptures and could not find any basis for the things happening in the congregation. . . . About that time I read a book by Milton Kovitz, "Fundamental Liberties of a Free People." I began to wonder how the [Watch Tower] Society could fight so hard for freedoms under the constitution and deny those same freedoms to others—freedoms guaranteed under the same constitution, like the right to free speech, rights of privacy, etc. No allowance was made for individual conscience. With the exception of one or two, the men in the congregation were more interested in obtaining positions of authority than praying for and obtaining true discernment. Comments at meetings were just a mere "parroting" of the *Watchtower's* printed page. No concern for those with weaknesses, just an overwhelming compulsion to "Keep the organization clean. . . ."
>
> I have forgotten so many things, names, dates, so I can't write with real authority the way you have. That carries no regret. I'm glad it's fading.
>
> One more thing, I have found it almost impossible to pray. I wish I could but I don't know how to develop a personal relationship with God and Christ. My old hurt feelings about the organization surface when I try to pray. After reading your book, I was standing at the sink feeling such sorrow for those that may be trying to have the courage they need and I asked God to help them. The first real prayer in a long time. Thank you.

Still others who wrote had had no association whatever with Jehovah's Witnesses, but they were experiencing a similar struggle

of conscience with regard to their own religion. Typical of several such letters is this one from a couple in California:

> My wife and I recently picked up a copy of your *Crisis of Conscience*. We were so thrilled to "discover" it. Thank you for writing with grace and dignity in a field so often characterized by sensationalism and bitterness. Your experience had a particular poignancy for us—we recently left the church of our heritage, the Mormon church, in order to "worship the Father in spirit and truth," unencumbered by "human commands and teachings." We found much that was familiar in your story. . . .
>
> Again, we thank you for your courageous witness to the graciousness of God in your life. May He keep you in the shelter of his healing wings.

I do not feel that what I wrote represents any particular act of "courage." I wrote the book because I felt that people had a right to know things that were otherwise inaccessible to them. What brings the greatest satisfaction in all the many hundreds of communications, are those expressions that indicate the persons' having drawn closer to their heavenly Father and his Son, of having their faith and confidence renewed and strengthened. But I also find particularly rewarding the comments of many that they found a freedom from bitterness and malice in what was written. I hold no such feelings toward Jehovah's Witnesses and I am happy if what I wrote does not convey those sentiments. Letters received in which people lash out at the movement, its leaders or its members, or give vent to ridicule and sarcasm, bring me no pleasure whatsoever.

I believe that those who think it is the individual persons in the organization or its leaders who are the true danger, are missing the point. I lived among the people themselves for nearly sixty years and I have no hesitation in saying that they are as sincere in their beliefs as people of any other religion. I knew personally the members of the Governing Body and, while I cannot say it of all, I knew many to be basically kind, honest persons, who were simply doing what they believed was expected of them, what has been done traditionally in the past. They were the heirs of the legacy of that past. In their minds "the organization" was indistinguishable and inseparable from God and Christ.

Nonetheless, error *has been and is being* presented as truth, actions have been and are being taken that constitute a grave misrepresentation and distortion of the teachings and life course of God's Son. While those involved cannot help but bear, each one,

a measure of responsibility, nonetheless they themselves are not the fundamental source of the problem. Rather than the people themselves, it is instead the beliefs and concepts that are the real problem, the true danger. They form the primary source from which the erroneous teachings, wrong attitudes and harsh acts proceed.

All kinds of persons have entered the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses for all kinds of reasons. And all kinds of persons (actually hundreds of thousands) have left for all kinds of reasons. Some have left, as one former Witness put it, 'for all the wrong reasons.' While the course they take thereafter may give at least some indication of the motivation that led to the departure, this is not necessarily a sure guide. Many go through a period of transition marked by uncertainty, even of doubting everything due to having suffered a severe disillusionment. They are temporarily adrift, and only when they have passed through this stage can their course give any clear indication of what their heart motivation has been.

One thing seems evident, however, and that is that mere departure from a religious system under the conviction that it contains serious falsehood does not of itself guarantee freedom. Simply to see error is, in many cases, not enough. Unless one can see *why* he or she once believed that error, and what was false in the *method of argumentation* that led one to believe, no great progress is attained, no solid basis for enduring Christian freedom is established. A person could easily abandon one system that proved erroneous and then quickly be taken in by another that likewise promulgates error, error which may be doctrinally quite different yet which is often supported by the very same kind of false argumentation and reasoning employed by the previous system.

Many of Jehovah's Witnesses have become disillusioned by teachings or predictions that proved false, others by the rigidity of certain policies, or by the pressure for engaging in a constant treadmill of organizationally programmed activity that brings little of genuine spiritual uplift. What is needed is to see the root cause of such fallacies, of the authoritarian nature of the policies, or of the futility of such programmed works. I believe that without an understanding of the Scriptural teachings involved one cannot see clearly that root cause and cannot see that there is something better and more genuine open to them. Unfortunately, the average Witness has never been aided to develop a good personal under-

standing of the Scriptures. As an organization member there was little encouragement to use his or her thinking powers other than to accept and, in effect, to commit to memory whatever information was supplied by the organization, submitting almost automatically to its directives. Questions, one of the mind's most powerful tools, were negatively portrayed as evidence of lack of faith, a sign of disrespect for God's approved channel of communication.

There is yet another, very significant, side to the matter. Many persons seek only a negative freedom. They seek to be free *from* something, to be free from feeling compelled to profess belief in certain teachings, to perform certain activities or conform to certain policies, all imposed by ecclesiastical authority.

Of itself that kind of freedom may be a proper goal, desirable, bringing release from oppressive restraints and from domination of mind and heart by men in a way which is clearly unchristian. But even so, by itself this release does not bring Christian freedom. For Christian freedom primarily implies a positive freedom—not merely a freedom *from* something but a freedom *to* something. It is the freedom not simply of *not doing* but of *doing*, as well as of *being*—as to what we are in heart and mind as an individual person. Rather than by the mere step of leaving a religious system viewed as false, it is by what we do with our lives *after* separating from that system that we demonstrate whether true freedom has actually been gained.

What follows in this book will consider these issues and how they apply. I recognize that a considerable period of time has elapsed and that the documents and quotations set forth may be earlier than the time of Watch Tower affiliation of many of the readers. Nonetheless they show the *basis* for conditions and the *pattern* for policies and attitudes that prevail to this day. While obviously directed primarily to persons with a background among Jehovah's Witnesses, the underlying principles involved are applicable in any religious setting. It is hoped that the information will be of aid to those who, out of love for truth and out of concern to be pleasing to God, are weighing the rightness of giving unquestioning loyalty to a religious organization. Its aim is to contribute in some measure to confidence in God's power to sustain us through whatever crises our holding to personal integrity may bring and help open up wider spiritual horizons and a more rewarding and satisfying life in service to our Creator, to our Master, God's Son, and to our fellow humans.

1

The Search for Christian Freedom

> *When Christ freed us, he meant us to remain free . . . what matters is faith that makes its power felt through love. You began your race well; who made you less anxious to obey the truth?*
> —Galatians 5:1, 6, 7, *Jerusalem Bible*

FREEDOM, like faith, love, and truth, is an essential part of true Christianity. Where freedom prevails, faith, love and truth prosper. When freedom is limited or lacking, they inevitably suffer. —2 Corinthians 3:17.

The freedom which God's Son gave us is for the very purpose that we may express our faith and love to the fullest degree, free from restraints which men, not God, would impose on us. Any willing forfeiture of that freedom inevitably means a sacrifice of truth. For those who would impose such restrictions do so, not by truth, but by error.

In the past several decades, hundreds of thousands of persons have separated from the religion that was the religion of my birth: Jehovah's Witnesses. During those same decades hundreds of thousands of other persons have entered that same religion, sufficiently so that the religion has continued to grow. I do not feel that either the departure or the entry of these persons *of themselves* proves anything.

The real question regarding those who leave is *why* they have left, what moved them to separate. Was it love of truth, the desire to express their faith and their love in Christian freedom? Could they not have achieved this by remaining where they were? Was their departure justified?

By the same token, questions may be asked about those entering. There is no question that a sizeable number of these were previously irreligious, unspiritual, essentially materialistic in their outlook. Since their entry, they have made a considerable change in these areas. At least a percentage of them were helped to free

themselves from serious problems of sexual promiscuity, alcoholism, drug addiction, violent or dishonest, even criminal, behavior. This has certainly marked an improvement in their lives.

Yet it is also true that this record of help is not unique. Most religions and church organizations can produce multiple case histories and testimonials of persons whose lives definitely turned around as a result of conversion. Similarly, the record and number of those helped by the Watch Tower organization in overcoming vicious habits or addictions can undoubtedly be equaled by even some social organizations, including Alcoholics Anonymous, drug addiction help centers, and similar entities. And certainly the majority of those becoming Witnesses were not persons previously plagued with such problems.

The question remains, then: Whatever the apparent benefits gained, *at what cost* have they been gained? Has their integration into the Witness organization eventually resulted in a forfeiture of freedom to express truth, faith and love in a way that is uncoerced and unrestrained by human domination? If this should be the case, then how genuine an improvement has been attained? How truly Christian are the apparent benefits?

These identical questions may be—and should be—applied to any religion professing to be Christian and it is hoped that what is here presented may prove of value to people of many religious backgrounds. For the issue here is actually far greater than the particular people involved. It reaches to the very heart of the good news about God's Son, Jesus Christ.

Where the Difference Lies

Several centuries ago, at the time of the Reformation, a time when many persons felt bound by conscience to reject ecclesiastical domination over their lives and their faith, one of them expressed the position of the Christian in this way:

> A Christian man is a free lord over everything and subject to no one.

He then followed this up by saying:

> A Christian man is an obedient servant in everything and subject to everyone.[1]

1 Martin Luther in his treatise on “”Freedom of the Christian Man.”

That sounds contradictory, but it is not. It basically paraphrases the apostle Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9:19:

> I am a free man and own no master; but I have made myself every man's servant, to win over as many as possible.[2]

The difference here is between a submission that is extracted by men who claim a superior position and who insist on submission to their authority, as contrasted with a submission and service that springs freely and spontaneously from one's own heart. It is a submission and service that results, not from yielding to others' claims and their demands, but from seeing other persons' *needs* and the good that can result. Paul recognized only one God-appointed Head and Master, Christ, and owned no other, whether a single man or a group of men. Of some who tried to assume such authority, he said:

> [They] have furtively crept in to spy on the liberty we enjoy in Christ Jesus, and want to reduce us all to slavery [attempted to tie us up with rules and regulations, *Phillips Modern English*]. I was so determined to safeguard for you the true meaning of the Good News that I refused even out of deference to yield to such people for one moment.[3]

The apostle did not view lightly the loss of Christian liberty through religious domination. When he wrote the words quoted at the start of this chapter it was to people who were letting themselves be misled by a false gospel or good news. In his day it was the effort to reimpose the Law Covenant upon Christians as obligatory that notably threatened their freedom in Christ. Wherein lay the grave danger? The law being urged upon Christians was, after all, the very same law that Jehovah himself gave through Moses. Why then would Paul say that its reimposition would lead to being "burdened again by a yoke of slavery"?

Part of the danger lay in the fact that such submission to law would inevitably allow for and bring into play the role of men who act as interpreters of the law, their interpretations taking on the force of rules, with judicial bodies, religious courts applying those rules and imposing sanctions as enforcers of the law. That would mean the reinstitution of a human priesthood over Christian believers, who had but one superior Priest and Mediator, God's Son.[4] Why then, did some men in the first-century Christian congrega-

2 *New English Bible* rendering.
3 Galatians 2:4, 5, *Jerusalem Bibl*e.
4 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:11-18.

tion work to reintroduce law-keeping? Evidently the reason was that, consciously or subconsciously, they wanted to exercise control and authority over others. They sought power over fellow Christians and one way to gain this was by interposing themselves between Christians and their rightful head, Christ. This was in fulfillment of the apostle's prophecy recorded at Acts 20:29, 30:

> I know that after my going away oppressive wolves will enter in among you and will not treat the flock with tenderness, and from among you yourselves men will rise and speak twisted things to draw away the disciples after themselves.[5]

Their arguments were plausible, had the sound of logic, and Paul shows that many of their hearers were being convinced, accepting this as gospel truth. The proponents of law-keeping could argue that God requires righteousness, holiness—which is true—and that without the imposition of law people simply will not hold to righteousness—which may be true of most people, but which should not be true of Christians. As an opening wedge, they urged circumcision, something instituted by God himself nearly two thousand years earlier, in Abraham's time. Once this base was accepted, however, they built on it the addition of other features of the law, presented as necessary to be right with God, to maintain a clean congregation.[6]

The gravest danger, then, lay in the way this emphasis on law-keeping would alter the Christian's relationship to God through Christ, the way in which it would misrepresent the basis for the Christian's hope and would dislocate the proper focus of Christian service. Paul recognized it as a serious denial of the good news he had been commissioned by God and Christ to preach.[7] Spelling out the gravity of the matter, he wrote:

> You who are trying to be justified by law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace. But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.[8]

5 The Greek word (*barys*) here rendered "oppressive" has the basic meaning of "heavy" and is the same word used at Matthew 23:4 with regard to the Pharisees laying "heavy burdens" on the people with their legalistic traditionalism. The weight of authoritarianism also enters the picture, and Diotrophes, described at 3 John 9, 10, exemplifies that domineering spirit.

6 As Acts 15:5, 10 shows, the issue was never solely circumcision but the keeping of the law as a whole. In verse 10, Peter describes that law as a burdensome "yoke" that none could successfully bear.

7 Galatians 1:1, 8-12.

8 Galatians 5:4-6, *NIV*.

In those few words, "faith expressing itself through love," the inspired writer sums up the essence of all Christian life. Not concern over keeping of rules, and an accompanying concern over the approval of others in doing so, and certainly not fear of being hailed before a judicial body for infractions of certain policies and regulations—a purely negative force—but rather faith and love are what motivate the Christian man and woman. Faith and love are the positive forces that supply not only the best deterrents against wrongdoing but also the greatest stimuli of the fine deeds that are the fruitage of those who are truly disciples of God's Son.

Perhaps an example from home life will illustrate more clearly the difference between being under law and being under grace or undeserved kindness—what this really results in, in the final analysis.

Consider a home where the husband is both a father and the prime wage earner. If he decided to exercise headship through a list of laws, setting out specific rules for his wife to observe, laying down the law as to just how the house should be kept, the method and days and times when she should care for all the household and family responsibilities—the cleaning, shopping, preparing of meals, caring for clothes, disciplining of the children—such a husband might have a very orderly home, with things functioning according to schedule. But he would also likely have an unhappy wife. He might have whatever satisfaction it would bring him to see that things were being done according to his code of rules, enforced by his authority. But he would never know if they were motivated by love.

By contrast, a husband who believes in the power of love and kindness, whose thinking is not governed by a false sense of superiority but who respects and trusts his wife, recognizes her intelligence, her ability to care for things with personal initiative, who believes that her interest in the home and family is as keen as his own, and who acts toward her in accord with this knowledge, may likewise enjoy an orderly, well-kept home, though one with a far more relaxed and happy atmosphere than the other described. He may attain this by good communication and discussion, preferring and seeking shared conclusions and decisions, rather than some mere show of arbitrary authority. When he sees a home that is neat and clean, meals well prepared, clothes cared for, or finds that his children have inculcated in them a fine respect for him, he can know that all this is done as a result of something other than a compliance with rules.

He can have the genuine satisfaction and joy of knowing that it is done out of his wife's love for him and their marriage and family.

The external results in the two cases may appear to be the same in certain areas. But the inner results are enormously different. The key is in the difference in motivation and spirit. And that is the difference, as regards the effect on the way one lives as a Christian, between being under law and being under God's gracious kindness through Christ Jesus.

Surely God's wisdom is manifest in this. Love and faith, the true "rules" of the Christian, can reach innermost thoughts and depths of the heart. They can touch and affect every facet of life in a way that law and rules can never accomplish. Because of not being under law, the Christian is put in the position of showing what he or she really is at heart. And that alone counts with God.

The longer I was a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, the more this issue pressed on my mind. I found that an inordinate amount of the time spent in our Governing Body sessions was occupied with the making of decisions that involved the regulating of people's personal lives. I saw that each ruling spawned questions that led to further rulings, by which the righteousness of others was judged. Only if they observed those rules were they to be viewed as having a right standing with God and Christ. Why should this be? Did we few men really have the authority from God to do this? Was it genuinely for the good of those we were supposed to be serving?

It was only when I came to the realization that the freedom the Scriptures taught was not simply freedom from Mosaic Law but freedom from the very concept of law-keeping—whatever the system of law involved—that I could see where the true problem lay. Instead of law-keeping, rule-keeping, as the means for attaining and maintaining righteousness within the Christian congregation, there was a superior way. It was this that made Christian freedom possible, workable and so genuinely desirable.

It is not that law is bad (it is, after all, the only thing that keeps many people of this world in check).[9] It is rather that love and faith are so superior, able to accomplish so much more than law, able to produce a righteous spirit that springs from the heart. For which person would we ourselves feel greater confidence, have greater respect and esteem: the person who says he refrains from a cer-

9 Compare 1 Timothy 1:8-10.

tain wrong act "because it is *unlawful*?" or the person who says he refrains "because it is *unloving* and *shows a lack of faith in God*?" The first expression reveals only the person's attitude toward, or concern for, law, while the second gives us a view of the person's heart and intimate feelings.

When God chose the people of Israel as his covenant nation, he did not call them into that relationship individually as separate persons but took the whole mass, "lock, stock and barrel," good, bad and indifferent. Their national level of spirituality was certainly not notable, then or later. The Law given to them fulfilled a necessary role. It served as a disciplinarian, leading them to the Messiah, just as ancient "pedagogues" led children to their teacher.[10] It made obvious their sinfulness and their helplessness to free themselves from sin, their need of a redeemer.[11] It provided a panorama of "shadows" symbolically outlining the realities to be fulfilled through the Messiah.[12] Without it there is no reason to believe that at the close of some 1500 years of the nation's existence there would have existed any semblance of the arrangements God instituted among them, arrangements which were to provide the background against which the Messiah could be positively identified. By contrast, Christians are called to relationship with God as his sons through Christ, not as a mass, but as individuals, not on the basis of fleshly descent, but on the basis of their heart and its motivation. Their teacher has come and they do not need a disciplinarian to lead them to him. They are "not under law, but under grace," the gracious kindness of God. They have given their hearts to him and his Spirit motivates them.[13] That Spirit can do infinitely more to safeguard any of us from wrongdoing and move us to good deeds than any law code or set of rules ever could. To miss that is to miss the whole point of the good news. To fail to appreciate the grand freedom this brings is to show disdain for what Christ accomplished in making it possible for us to be "not under law but under undeserved kindness" of God.

As in any other area of life, it is true in religious matters that "the price of freedom is eternal vigilance." Christian freedom is lost not so much by violent conquest as by subtle erosion, so that

10 Galatians 3:23-26, *NRSV*
11 Galatians 3:19, 21, 22.
12 Colossians 2:16, 17.
13 Romans 6:14-19.

little by little one relinquishes to others his God-given right to exercise his own conscience, to do his own thinking so as to arrive at conclusions and convictions that are truly his own, and so that his faith is the product of his own heart, based on a personal knowledge of God's Word. Eventually he arrives at a secondhand faith based on the convictions and reasonings of others. To sacrifice those rights inherent to Christian freedom—to whatever degree and for whatever reason—is to limit and inhibit our expression of faith and love. For such expression of these qualities to be spontaneous, inwardly motivated, it must enjoy a climate of freedom. For "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."[14] .

Does that climate of Christian freedom flourish within the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, fostering expressions of love and faith that freely result from inner motivation and not from external pressure? I believe the evidence shows that it does not. My years on the Governing Body of that organization convince me that it does not. Not that all individual Witnesses are affected to the same extent. Some are able to cope more effectively with the organizational pressure. They are able to resist encroachment on their individuality, striving to avoid the narrowness of viewpoint and lock-step mentality that come from channeled thinking. Such ones often manifest a spontaneity of motivation that is noteworthy. Yet, the evidence is that this is not a *result* of the organization, but something maintained *in spite of* the organization. Nor do I think the situation is unique among Jehovah's Witnesses. But I believe they are all affected to some degree and that the effect is inevitably a hurtful one. The attitude inculcated is based, not on truth—the truth that makes one free—but on a distortion of truth. It distorts their understanding of what being a follower of God's Son actually embraces. It hinders them in making the fullest expression of his qualities. It restricts them in doing many acts of love and faith which their hearts would indicate and obliges them to perform other acts for which they see no convincing Scriptural reason. In one way or another, in greater or lesser measure, freedom is sacrificed. Obscured or forgotten is the truth that, "when Christ freed us, he meant us to remain free."

The roots of the problem are not one, but several. However, I believe that what next follows points to a very fundamental cause.

14 2 Cointhians 3:17, *RSV*.

2

The Channel of God

Test everything. Hold on to the good.
—1 Thessalonians 5:21, *New International Version*

Dearly loved friends, don't always believe everything you hear just because someone says it is a message from God: test it first to see if it really is.
—1 John 4:1, *The Living Bible*

A PROMINENT eighteenth-century British scholar, a religious leader known as a lover of civil and religious liberty, made this striking statement:

> Authority is the greatest and most irreconcilable enemy to truth and argument that this world ever furnished. All the sophistry—all the color of plausibility—the artifice and cunning of the subtlest disputer in the world may be laid open and turned to the advantage of that very truth which they are designed to hide; but against authority there is no defence.[1]

If indeed authority has been an ancient enemy of truth, it has also been an ancient enemy of freedom, for truth is a prime liberating source, able 'to make one free.'[2] When compelled to confront truth in the field of combat, error finds its favorite weapon, and also its ultimate refuge in authority. All too often, the claimed authority has no more genuineness than does the error itself.

No matter how much evidence may be supplied, no matter how much Scriptural testimony may be presented, no matter how much logic may be brought to bear on the points discussed in this book, these may all be rejected and discarded by those who place a particular human religious authority as their guide, as the determiner of truth. In fact, with the vast majority of Jehovah's Witnesses all such evidence and Scriptural testimony will be rejected before it is even heard—because authority has decreed for them that they

1 Bishop Benjamin Hoadley, quoted in the *McClintock & Strong Cyclopaedia of Biblical, Theological and Ecclesiastical Literature*, Vol. I, pages 553, 554.[1]
2 John 8:32.

should reject it. Those under the authority are thus robbed of the freedom to decide for themselves whether the information is factual or false, beneficial or detrimental.

And the same is true of all persons who submit to any human religious authority as their supreme arbiter of right and wrong. If they choose to allow that authority to decide for them, speak for them, think for them, then any alternative argument or evidence advanced has no hope of a fair hearing, for "against authority there is no defence." The authority has no need to respond, no need to refute, or even to consider the evidence presented; it simply condemns. This is, I believe, the basic issue, and unless it is first understood, little else can be understood. At least that has proved to be the case in my own experience.

Men can make no greater claim to authority than to claim to speak for God—even more than that—to claim to be his *sole channel of communication* to all mankind. To occupy such a position would be an awesome responsibility indeed, and one that should logically call for the greatest of humility on the part of imperfect humans if they were in fact assigned to fill it.

A fitting analogy might be that of a slave sent forth by a king to deliver a proclamation. If impressed with his own importance, lacking humility, the messenger might feel free to add to the message or make adjustments, while nonetheless insisting that all hearers should accept whatever he presented as a bona fide royal order. If people questioned him on certain points, he might become resentful, seek to awe them with his royal backing in order to override any doubts about the authenticity of his statements.

By contrast, a truly humble messenger would scrupulously avoid any alteration of what came from the royal source. He would not become resentful if asked for proof of full authenticity for what he said, nor would he criticize if some took steps to confirm that the message he presented was delivered just as given, free from embroidery or change. Rather than decry such investigation as an abusive lack of respect for himself (the mere slave), he would accept it, even welcome it, as evidence of the inquirer's concern and deep respect for the will of his master, the Sovereign.

The Watch Tower Society repeatedly states that its message has life and death importance. The organization claims its message has been sent by God, the supreme Sovereign, for all mankind, with

ultimate destruction as the outcome for disobedience. Some other religions take a similar position.

Surely, any claim of such magnitude should never go untested. In fact, the greatness of the claim calls for, not less, but more caution, more careful testing. Simple respect for God should move us, actually compel us, to make sure that the message is genuinely His, free from additions or alterations. The deeper our respect for God, the more conscientious our effort in testing.

I can vouch for the fact that the Watch Tower organization views with the utmost seriousness its claimed position of being God's sole channel of communication on earth. Perhaps some of the plainest statements made by organization officials as to what will be the result for any who reject their message came in a court trial held in Scotland, back in 1954. The case, known as the Walsh case, centered around the claim for ministerial status on the part of one of Jehovah's Witnesses who was the presiding overseer of a congregation in Scotland. I remember years ago hearing personally from my uncle (later the Watch Tower president) of his part in that trial, but it was not until seeing the actual court record in recent times that I realized all that the testimony covered.

With permission of the Keeper of the Records of Scotland, some portions of the official court record of the testimony are here reproduced.[3] As noted, Fred Franz, at that time the organization's vice president, was first on the witness stand, and the court record includes this information, portions of which I have underlined. ("Q" represents the question put, "A" the response given).

> Q. In addition to these regular publications do you prepare and issue a number of theological pamphlets and books from time to time? A. Yes. Q. Can you tell me this; are these theological publications and the semi-monthly periodicals used for discussion of statements of doctrine? A. Yes. Q. Are these statements of doctrine held to be authoritative within the Society? A. Yes. Q. Is their acceptance a matter of choice, or is it obligatory on all those who wish to be and remain members of the Society? A. It is obligatory.

3 Occasional spelling errors appearing in the quotations are those made by the court transcriber.

According to this testimony, anyone wishing to remain as one of Jehovah's Witnesses has no alternative, no option but to accept the published statements of the Watch Tower Society, for whom Fred Franz spoke as a representative. Acceptance is "obligatory." The consequences are indicated in his further testimony:

> Q. So that there will be in effect a new human society existing on earth as the result of that? A. Yes. There will be a new world society in a new earth under new heavens, the former heavens and the former earth having passed away in the battle of Armageddon. Q. Then the population of this new earth, will that consist of Jehovah's Witnesses alone? A. Initially it will consist of Jehovah's Witnesses alone. The members of the remnant expect to survive that battle of Armageddon the same as a great crowd of these other sheep. The continuance of the remnant upon the earth after the battle of Armageddon will be temporary because they must finish their earthly course faithful in death, but the other sheep by continued obedience to the will of God may continue to live on earth for ever.

Acceptance therefore becomes a life or death matter, for those surviving Armageddon will consist of "Jehovah's Witnesses alone." What if a congregation member were to reject a certain organizational teaching because of conscientiously believing it lacked Scriptural backing and, as a result, the person was subsequently disfellowshiped? What is the official position regarding disfellowshiped persons who do not gain reinstatement? That position is spelled out as follows in the testimony:

> Q. And are these disciplinary powers in fact exercised when the occasion arises? A. Yes, they are. Q. Well I will not ask you any more questions about that side of the matter but are there offences which are regarded as so grave as to warrant expulsion without hope of re-instatement? A. Yes. The fact is that ex-communication in itself can lead to the annihilation of the ex-communicated one, if that individual never repented and corrected his course of action, and he

continued outside the organisation. There would be no hope of life for him in the new world, but there is a course of action which would result in ex-communicatoon from which the individual could be certain never to return, and this is called the sin against the Holy Spirit.

The British government counsellor later directed attention to certain teachings that the Watch Tower organization had in time rejected, including some involving certain specific dates. What if someone, at the time when such teaching was promulgated, had seen the error in it and had therefore not accepted it? What would the organization's attitude toward such one be? The testimony explains this

Q. Is it not the case that Pastor Russell put that date in 1874? A. No. Q. Is it not the case that he fixed the date prior to 1914? A. Yes. Q. What date did he fix? A. The end of the time of the Gentiles he fixed as 1914. Q. Did he not fix 1874 as some other crucial date? A. 1874 used to be understood as the date of Jesus' Second Coming spiritually. Q. Do you say, usedto be understood? A. That is right. Q. That was issued as a fact which was to be accepted by all who were Jehovah's Witnesses? A. Yes. Q. That is no longer now accepted, is it? A. No. Q. Pastor Russell in so concluding based the view, did he not, on an interpretation of the Book of Daniel? A. Partly. Q. And in particular Daniel, Chapter 7 Verse 7, and Daniel, Chapter 12, Verse 12 ? A . Daniel, 7, 7, and 12, 12. What did you say, he based something on these Scriptures? Q. His date of 1874 as a crucial date and the date of Christ's Second Coming? A. No. Q. What did you say he fixed it as; I understood that is what you said, I must have misunderstood you? A. He did not base 1874 on these Scriptures. Q. He based it on these Scriptures coupled with the view that the Austro-Gothic Monarchy occurred in 539?

A. Yes. 539 was a date that he used in the calculation. But 1874 was not based on that. Q. But it was a calculation which is no longer accepted by the Board of Directors of the Society? A. That is correct. Q. So that am I correct, I am just anxious to canvas the position; it became the bounden duty of the Witnesses to accept this miscalculation? A. Yes.

Q. So that what is published as the truth today by the Society may have to be admitted to be wrong in a few years? A. We have to wait and see. Q. And in the meantime the body of Jehovah's Wutnesses have been following error? A. They have been following misconstructions on the Scriptures Q. Error? A. Well. error.

Again the question as to how great the authority attributed to the Watch Tower Society's publications is, came in for discussion. While at one point the vice president had said that "one does not compulsorily accept," his testimony thereafter reverts back to the earlier position, as can be seen:

A.- In order to become an Ordained Minister of a congregation he must come to an understanding of the things contained in these books. Q.- But, then, is baptism not the ordaining of a person as a Minister? A.- Yes Q.- Therefore at baptism must he know those books? A.- He must understand the purposes of God which are set forth in those books. Q.- Set forth in those books, and set forth in those books as an interpretation of the Bible? A.- These books give an exposition on the whole Scriptures. Q.- But an authoritative exposition? A.- They submit the Bible or the statements that are therein made, and the individual examines the statement and then the Scripture to see that the statement is Scripturally supported. Q.- He what? A.- He examines the Scripture to see whether the

statement is supported by the Scripture. As the Apostle says: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good". Q.- I understood the position to be - do please correct me if I am wrong - that a member of the Jehovah's Witnesses must accept as a true Scripture and interpretation what is given in the books I referred you to? A.- But he does not compulsorily do so, he is given his Cristian right of examining the Scriptures to confirm that this is Scripturally sustained. Q.- And if he finds that the Scripture is not sustained by the books, or vice versa, what does he do? A.- The Scripture is there in support of the statement, that is why it is put there. Q.- What does a man do if he finds a disharmony between the Scripture and those books? A.- You will have to produce me a man who does find that, then I can answer, or he will answer. Q.- Did you imply that the individual member has the right of reading the books and the Bible and forming his own view as to the proper interpretation of Holy Writ? A.- He comes - - - Q.- Would you say yes or no, and then qualify? A.- No. Do you want me to qualify now? Q.- Yes, if you wish? A.- The Scripture is there given in support of the statement, and therefore the individual when he looks up the Scripture and thereby verifies the statement, then he comes to the Scriptural view of the matter, Scriptural understanding as it is written in Acts, the seventeenth chapter and the eleventh verse, that the Bereans were more noble than those of Thessalonica in that they received the Word with all readiness, and they searched the Scipture to see whether those things were so, and we instruct to follow that noble course of the Bereans in searching the Scripture to see whether these things were so. Q.- A Witness has no alternative, has he, to accept as authoritative and to be obeyed instructions

issued in the "Watchtower" or the "Informant" or "Awake"?
A.- He must accept those.

Q. Is there any hope of salvation for a man who depends upon his Bible alone when he is in a situation in the world where he cannot get the tracts and publications of your Incorporation? A. He is dependent upon the Bible.
Q. Will he be able to interpret it truly? A. Not.
Q. I do not want to handy texts with you, but didn't Jesus say, "Whosoever believeth in me, liveth and believeth in me shall never die."? A. Yes.

The testimony by the witness is, then, that the message that the Watch Tower Society, as God's channel, publishes is the only means whereby people on earth in this twentieth century can gain an understanding of Scripture. Failure to accept what these publications contain means incurring divine disfavor, death itself.

This, however, was the testimony of only one man, Fred Franz, the vice president. There were two other responsible officials of the headquarters organization who had come to Scotland to testify. Did their testimony confirm his on these matters? Next on the stand was the Society's legal counsel, Hayden C. Covington. Following are statements he made during the course of his testimony:

Q.- Is it not vital to speak the truth on religious matters? A.- It certainly is. Q.- Is there in your view room in a religion for a change of interpretation of Holy Writ from time to time? A.- There is every reason for a change in interpretation as we view it, of the Bible. Our view becomes more clear as we see the prophesy fulfilled by time. Q.- You have promulgated - forgive the word - false prophesy? A.- We have - I do not think we have promulgated false prophesy, there have been statements that were erroneous, that is the way I put it, and mistaken. Q.- Is it a most vital consideration in the present situation of the world to know if

the prophesy can be interpreted into terms of fact, when Christ's Second Coming was? A.- That is true, and we have always striven to see that we have the truth before we utter it. We go on the very best information we have but we cannot wait until we get perfect, because if we wait until we get perfect we would never be able to speak. Q.- Let us follow that up just a little. It was promulgated as a matter which must be believed by all members of Jehovah's Witnesses that the Lord's Second Coming took place in 1874? A.- I am not familiar with that. You are speaking on a matter that I know nothing of. Q.- You heard Mr. Franz's evidence? A.- I heard Mr. Franz testify, but I am not familiar with what he said on that, I mean the subject matter of what he was talking about, so I cannot answer any more than you can, having heard what he said. Q.- Leave me out of it? A.- That is the source of my information, what I have heard in court. Q.- You have studied the literature of your movement? A.- Yes, but not all of it. I have not studied the seven volumes of "Studies in the Scriptures", and I have not studied this matter that you are mentioning now of 1874. I am not at all familiar with that. Q.- Assume from me that it was promulgated as authoritative by the Society that Christ's Second Coming was in 1874? A.- Taking that assumption as a fact, it is a hypothetical statement. Q.- That was the publication of false prophesy?? A.- That was the publication of a false prophesy, it was a false statement or an erroneous statement in fulfilment of a prophesy that was false or erroneous. Q.- And that had to be believed by the whole of Jehovah's Witnesses? A.- Yes, because you must understand we must have unity, we cannot have disunity with a lot of people going every way, so every is supposed to march in step. Q.- You do not believe in the wordly armies, do you? A.- We believe

in the Christian army of God. Q.- Do you believe in the worldly armies? A.- We have nothing to say about that, we do not preach against them, we merely say that the worldly armies, like the nations of the world today, are a part of Satan's Organisation, and we do not take part in them, but we do not say themnations cannot have their armies, we do not preach against warfare, we are merely claiming our exemption from it, that is all. Q.- Back to the point now. A false prophecy was promulgated? A.- I agree that. Q.- It had to be accepted by Jehovah's Witnesses? A.- That is correct. Q.- If a member of Jehovah's Witnesses took the view himself that that prophecy was wrong and said so he would be disfellowshipped? A.-Yes, if he said so and kept persisting in creating trouble, because if the whole organisation believes one thing, even though it be erroneous, and somebody else starts on his own trying to put his ideas across then there is disunity and trouble, there cannot be harmony, there cannot be marching. When a change comes it should come from the proper source, the head of the organisation, the governing body, not from the bottom upwards, because everybody would have ideas, and the organisation would disintegrate and go in a thousand different directions. Our purpose is to have unity.

Q.- Unity at all costs? A.- Unity at all costs, because we believe and are sure that Jehovah God is using our organisation, the governing body of our organisation to direct it, even though mistakes are made from time to time. Q.- And unity based upon an enforced acceptance of false prophecy? A.- That is conceded to be true. Q.- And the person who expressed his view, as you say, that it was wrong, and was

disfellowshipped, would be in breach of the Covenant, if he was baptised? A.- That is correct. Q.- And as you said yesterday expressly, would be worthy of death? A.- I think - - - Q.- Would you say yes or no ? A.- I will answer yes, unhesitatingly. Q.- Do you call that religion? A.- It certainly is. Q.- Do you call it Christianity? A.- I certainly do.

Q. In connection with mistakes, you were cross-examined at some length as to differences of view which might have taken place in the authoritative exposition of the Scriptures over the years since the foundation of the Society, and I think you agreed there had been differences? A. Yes. Q. You also quite frankly agreed that persons who at any time are not prepared to accept authoritative exposition are liable to expulsion from the Society, with such spiritual consequences as that may entail? A. Yes, I said that and I state it again.

Unity, according to the testimony of this Society representative, can require of a Christian that he accept as true what he believes God's Word shows to be false. No matter what he reads in the Bible, he is not to express that if it does not coincide with the organization's authoritative teachings. While it may be clear to him from God's own Word, this is not enough. He must wait until the change issues "from the proper source, the head of the organization, the governing body, not from the bottom upwards." No matter what he reads in the Bible, he must wait for the "proper source," the Governing Body, to tell him what is acceptable for belief and for discussion.

The justification for such a remarkable claim? There must be "unity at all costs," even if it must be based on "an enforced acceptance of false prophecy." To fail in this respect is to merit disfellowshiping and "be worthy of death." In effect, while one may read the Master's *own words* in writing, he cannot accept or act on them *if the Master's professed "slave" tells him something different.* This is, in plain language, the organizational concept advanced.

Yet a third witness took the stand. This final headquarters official testifying was the Secretary-Treasurer, Grant Suiter, and his testimony included these statements of official position:

> Q. What is the position of a Company Servant in that respect? A. He must have met the qualifications that have been previously testified to, of maturity and understanding and spiritual understanding, and in ability to feed the Congregation. He must have that training previously mentioned in the Theocratic Ministry School, be a leader in the field ministry itself, be apt to teach, and otherwise have qualifications that the Scriptures laid down. Man cannot lay down qualifications that the Scriptures do not, you see. Q. That is in general terms. But to come down to actual practice, he must attend the Theocratic Ministry School, must he not? A. Yes. Q. And there he finds the library? A. Yes. Q. Isn't he expected to familiarize himself with the publications of the Society? A. He certainly is. Q. Indeed can he in the view of Jehovah's Witnesses have an understanding of the Scriptures apart from the publications of Jehovah's Witnesses? A. No. Q. Only by the publications can he have a right understanding of the Scriptures? A. That is right. Q. Is that not arrogance? A. No. Q. You heard the evidence about 1874 having been found to be wrong as a material and crucial date, and about 1925 being a wrong date. On these two items, acceptance and absolute acceptance as Truth was imposed upon all Jehovah's Witnesses at the time? A. That is right. Q. You agree that that was acceptance of the false? A. No, not entirely. The points that were wrong were false because they were in error, but the overall result is what is important. All through these

years of the ministry of Jehovah's Witnesses, since the formation of the Society, the Pennsylvania Corporation, there has been a constant turning of the hearts and the minds of people to God's Word and its righteous precepts, and giving them spiritual strength to stand up for what they know to be right, to hold high Jehovah's name to announce his Kingdom. There is no comparison between the incidental points that have been corrected compared with the importance of the main thing, the worship of Jehovah God. That has been inculcated in the minds of Jehovah's Witnesses and countless other persons all through these years.

The Secretary-Treasurer affirmed that "Man cannot lay down qualifications that the Scriptures do not." Yet his own testimony, as well as that of the two preceding officials, is that 'only by the Watch Tower Society's publications can anyone have a right understanding of Scripture.' Though false prophecy was advanced, "absolute acceptance [of such] as Truth was imposed upon all Jehovah's Witnesses at the time," and this is firmly declared to be right.[4] The Secretary-Treasurer asserts that "the overall result is what is important," hence the organization should not be judged adversely because they promulgated errors on "incidental points" as long as the "main thing, the worship of Jehovah God" was conveyed. It would be unfair to equate the importance of those errors with the main message. "There is no comparison," the Secretary-Treasurer said.

This latter claim is all very well of itself. But Suiter's own testimony, as also that of the other two, shows that, whereas the organization asks for such tolerance and balanced assessment for itself as its rightful due, it denies this to others. While asking for tolerance for itself, it does not grant it to any member who objects to, and who cannot accept, erroneous teachings. For them the result is disfellowshiping, being cut off as worthy of death. This is the case no matter how thoroughly the individual might accept the "main" point of the message, or how sincerely and devotedly he or she might "worship Jehovah God." No, the person must accept the *whole message*, lock, stock and barrel,

4 *Crisis of Conscience*, Chapter 7 ("Predictions and Presumption), as to the claims made regarding the years 1874 and 1925 mentioned in the court testimony

just as the organizational messenger saw fit to present it, errors included, with expulsion as the alternative. The organization discounts as only "incidental" the errors it publishes, yet, if those same errors *are not accepted* or *are objected to*, they paradoxically become of enormous importance, sufficient to warrant taking disfellowshipment action.

This strange thinking makes it appear that God is very displeased with any person who fails to accept errors that a claimed messenger of God may speak in His name, displeased that the person should insist on 'testing everything and holding fast only to that which proves good and true,' genuinely from God. Such person, if put out by the organization, God would not judge worthy of life. Though it may seem incredible, the ones giving this testimony evidently saw no inconsistency in all this.

All of which calls to mind the proverbial principle that "two sorts of weights are something detestable to Jehovah, and a cheating pair of scales is not good." [5] It seems unreasonable to believe that God could feel that strongly about ordinary commercial transactions (where a man dishonestly uses different weights according to whether he is buying or selling) and not feel far more strongly about dealings involving people's spiritual interests, where men apply one standard for themselves when asking for tolerance and a very different standard when called upon to show it to others. God's genuine Messenger, Jesus Christ, said: "For with what judgment you are judging, you will be judged; and with the measure that you are measuring out, they will measure out to you." [6]

Not only in this trial but in frequent other occasions the Watch Tower organization calls on Jehovah's Witnesses to pass over its errors, asserting that these are counterbalanced and outweighed by other, more favorable, factors. Yet it does not apply that standard in its dealing with those under its authority. If they hold any view, even though minor, that does not coincide with the Watch Tower's teachings, this is not viewed as just a human "error" which may in time be corrected, but instead is deemed a basis for disfellowshiping. The fact that the 'overall picture' may show that the individual who thus disagrees clearly manifests genuine Christian qualities is not considered relevant. He must agree with the organization. Christ's words make clear that he does not approve of such unequal application of standards.

5 Proverbs 20:23
6 Matthew 7:2

In view of the seriousness of the issues involved in the Scotland court trial, there seems to be no reason for thinking that these three official witnesses were simply advancing mere personal viewpoints. Although the goal they sought to attain in this particular trial (which included being recognized as an 'established religion') may have influenced somewhat the language they used, they nonetheless presented the authoritative policy of their organization, the legalism that is dominant therein. The record, past and present, shows that. My own experience with the Governing Body confirms it.

Some points made by the Watch Tower Society's officials reflected remarkably statements expressed some forty-five years earlier by Pastor Russell in the later years of his presidency. In the September 15, 1910, issue of the *Watch Tower*, the Society's first president compared the value of straight Bible reading with the value of reading the *Scripture Studies*, a set of six volumes he wrote. This was his estimation:

> If, then, the Lord has provided us with something in our day that other days than those of the Apostles knew nothing about, no matter how good nor how wise they were—for us to ignore the line of teaching which has been thus developed would be, in our judgment, to ignore the Lord's providences. It is for each one to think for himself, however, and to guide his conduct in every way accordingly.
>
> If the six volumes of SCRIPTURE STUDIES are practically the Bible topically arranged, with Bible proof-texts given, we might not improperly name the volumes—the Bible in an arranged form. That is to say, they are not merely comments on the Bible, but they are practically the Bible itself, since there is no desire to build any doctrine or thought on any individual preference or on any individual wisdom, but to present the entire matter on the lines of the Word of God. We therefore think it safe to follow this kind of reading, this kind of instruction, this kind of Bible study.
>
> Furthermore, not only do we find that people cannot see the divine plan in studying the Bible by itself, but we see, also, that if anyone lays the SCRIPTURE STUDIES aside, even after he has used them, after he has become familiar with them, after he has read them for ten years—if he then lays them aside and ignores them and goes to the Bible alone, though he has understood his Bible for ten years, our experience shows that within two years he goes into darkness. On the other hand, if he had merely read the SCRIPTURE STUDIES with their references, and had not read a page of the Bible, as such, he would be in the light at the end of the two years, because he would have the light of the Scriptures.

> "THEY SHALL BE ALL TAUGHT OF GOD"
>
> We would conclude, practically, that we could not understand anything about the Bible except as it was revealed. We

would, therefore, not waste a great deal of time doing what we know some people do, reading chapter after chapter, to no profit. We would not think of doing it. We would not think we were studying the Scriptures at all. We would think we were following the course that had been anything but profitable to ourselves and many others in the past—merely reading over the Scriptures. We would say that the same Heavenly Father who had guided us to this truth, to this understanding of the Scriptures as his children, if he had some further information for us he would bring it to our attention in some manner; and therefore we would not see the necessity of reading the New Testament every day or every year; we would not consider that necessary. We would consider that the Scripture which says, "They shall be all taught of God," would imply that in his own appointed way God would bring to our attention whatever feature of divine truth would be "meat in due season for the household of faith."

"SCRIPTURE STUDIES" NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR THE BIBLE

This is not, therefore, putting the SCRIPTURE STUDIES as a substitute for the Bible, because so far as substituting for the Bible, the STUDIES, on the contrary, continually refer to the Bible; and if one has any doubt as to a reference or if one's recollection should lapse in any degree, one should refresh his memory, and, in fact, should see that his every thought is in harmony with the Bible—not merely in accord with the SCRIPTURE STUDIES, but in accord with the Bible.

We might remark that quite a number of the friends in the Truth are making it a rule to read twelve pages of the SCRIPTURE STUDIES a day, and that we do not know one who has been following this course and making use of the various means of grace the Lord has provided (Dawn and testimony meetings and Sunday meetings and Pilgrim meetings and the Berean lessons, Manna text, etc.), who has gone out of the truth. We know a great many who, on the contrary, have been of the opinion that they knew these things long ago, while in fact they do not know half of what they did know—they have forgotten more than half of what they read and they are those who are now stumbling—going into outer darkness.

We are not wishing in this to say anything against one's poring over chapters that he does not understand and others do not understand, hoping that he might light on some truth. We have no objection to this. He has a perfect right to do so if he wishes. He has a right to spend weeks and years in this way if he chooses, but the chances even then are that when he does light on something he will have it all wrong.

I had heard only vague references to these statements until, in 1979, in a Governing Body session, President Franz referred to them in support of a point he was making, saying that:

> Pastor Russell used to say that if a person had to choose between having just the Bible itself or one of the Society's publications, he would be better off with the Society's publications.

At the time I found it hard to believe that a statement like that would ever be repeated as having any validity at all, and when I later looked it up in the 1910 Watch Tower I felt that an organization could recall those statements only with blushing.

The clear import of the Watch Tower statements (written by Russell) was that it is unlikely that anyone will learn God's purpose with just the Bible. Furthermore, that anyone laying aside the *Scripture Studies* written by Russell and reading the Bible alone would, according to experience, go into darkness "within two years." Anyone reading the *Scripture Studies* , however, would still be in the light, though he had not picked up the Bible itself during those two years. Reading the Bible chapter by chapter was not considered "necessary," but reading the *Scripture Studies* regularly every day is commended as making use of "the Lord's provision." Apparently before the appearance of these writings by the Watch Tower president, no person on earth could really understand the Bible.

Remarkably, of all the publications written by Russell not a single one is today printed or stocked by the Watch Tower Society. Yet the viewpoint expressed by the Society's president in 1910 was essentially restated in Scotland in 1954 and also in the Governing Body session in 1979. One appreciable difference was that with the passage of years the focus had shifted to the "organization" instead of being on an individual and his writings. The claim that the Watch Tower Society's literature was an essential, a virtually indispensable requirement for understanding the Bible, remained. Not only remained but was extended with remarkable dogmatism, for the acceptance of the teachings found in that literature was now stated as a divine requirement for gaining life itself. Unlike the situation in Russell's time, disagreement now would lead to excommunication.

Still later in 1979, in fact on November 17, the day after I left on a "zone" trip to West Africa, Fred Franz, now the Society's president, conducted the morning Bible discussion for the headquarters family. He made these comments, which one member in attendance wrote down as they were given and passed them on to me upon my return as a matter of interest:

> Some persons are now talking about reading the Bible, that we should read "just the Bible." Well, that's what Christendom's churches have been telling the people to do for centuries and look at the mess that's resulted.
>
> It's good to remember that we were the Watch Tower Tract Society for a long time before we became the Watch Tower *Bible* and Tract Society.[7] Only in comparatively recent times have we actually

7 The original name of the corporation was: Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society.

published Bibles. The sole purpose of our existence as a Society is to announce the Kingdom established in 1914 and to sound the warning of the fall of Babylon the Great. We have a *special* message to deliver.

When conducting morning sessions at headquarters, I myself had often urged more reading of the Scriptures themselves, stressing them as the real source of knowledge and the final authority for Christians. I had no sense of advocating something inimical to the interests of the organization. I had never forgotten what I thought were powerful and unforgettable points made in a *Watchtower* issue published back in November 1,1946. On page 330, the article bearing the title "Let God Prove to Be True," discussed the claims of both Jewish and Catholic authorities of being "at all times the depositary of all truth." These were the statements made:

> [87] The written Word of God, therefore, does not need the addition of traditions which are the private interpretations of men and of religious organizations. It is not on our own authority that we say that the Bible is sufficient without such. The inspired apostle Paul writes his faithful fellow worker, Timothy, to that effect, saying: "From thy infancy thou hast known the holy scriptures, which can instruct thee to salvation, by the faith which is in Christ Jesus. All scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work." (2 Tim. 3:15-17, *Douay*) Had the oral traditions of religious men been necessary to complement the canon of the Bible, Paul would not have said that the inspired Holy Scriptures were profitable to the point of making the men of God *perfect* in faith and devotion to God. It would have been inadequate and would have left the man of God unperfected. But with Timothy's full maturity as a Christian in view, Paul instructed him to take pains to deal with the Bible and handle it aright, saying: "Carefully study to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth." (2 Tim. 2:15, *Douay*) This faithful instruction all those who seek to serve God as His witnesses do well to follow.

AUTHORITY OF HIGHER POWERS NOT DISREGARDED

38 Now a final argument is shot at us by those who uphold an ecclesiastical or hierarchical organization. They say: 'Even doing away with religious traditions, the Bible cannot be left for each reader to interpret for himself; we still need the visible organization of the faithful to act as a "living magisterium" or teaching power in order to interpret the Bible and make plain the will of God from it. Look at how the Bible, left to each one's individual interpretation, has resulted in the religiously divided condition of Protestantism.' To this we say, Protestantism's multitude of sects and cults is no proof that the Bible is a divisive force to those who take it, and it alone, as adequate. The Bible is not a divisive Book, for it is harmonious from cover to cover and agrees with itself, in all its canonical books. The divisive force among the Catholic and Protestant religionists of Christendom is the religious traditions which they follow. The truth of the Bible is a unifying power. After Christ Jesus prayed: "Sanctify them through thy word: thy word is truth," he immediately prayed that all his believers, those then following him and those yet due to believe, should be united in one, just as he and his heavenly Father are one. (John 17:17-23) It is now that this Christian oneness must be attained; now, at this end of the world. It *has* been attained by Jehovah's witnesses, who have come forth from inside and outside of the multitude of religious organizations and who now unite in God's service despite their former religious disagreements.

39 How is this? How is disunity over each one's individual interpretation of the Holy Scriptures now overcome or avoided? Is it because they are united around a visible human organization or around a visible human leader? The answer is No. It is because they recognize Jehovah God and Christ Jesus as The Higher Powers to whom every Christian soul must be subject for conscience' sake. (Rom. 13:1) It is because they recognize Jehovah God as the one true and living God, the Most High or Supreme One, and Christ Jesus as His anointed King and Elect Servant, whom Jehovah has appointed as the Leader and Commander to the

> peoples. (Isa. 42:1; 55:3,4; Matt. 12:18; Acts 13:34) It is, too, because they recognize Jehovah God as the living, ever-present Teacher of His church on earth, and that he teaches the "church of God" through her Head, Christ Jesus.—Isa. 54:13; John 6:45.
>
> 40 Hence Jehovah's witnesses do not claim the church to be what the religious Hierarchy claim their religious organization to be, namely, the one holding the magisterium or teaching office and hence "the divinely appointed Custodian and Interpreter of the Bible" and whose "office of infallible Guide were superfluous if each individual could interpret the Bible for himself".* Rather than take this religious tradition of the Hierarchy, those who recognize the higher authority of Jehovah God and Christ Jesus will take the inspired and infallible statement of the apostle to Timothy regarding the church. This reads: "Thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth."—1 Tim. 3:15, *Douay*.

I was deeply impressed by the *Watchtower* article's response in refutation of claims of "hierarchical organizations" who say, first, that,

> "The Bible cannot be left for each reader to interpret for himself,"

and, second, who say that,

> "We still need the visible organization of the faithful to act as a 'living magisterium' or teaching power,"

and, third, that,

> "The Bible is a divisive force to those who take it, and it alone, as adequate."

To each of those claims the *Watchtower's* response was, "Not true!"

In no uncertain terms it said that the way to avoid disunity was not by being "united around a visible human organization," but through recognition of Jehovah God and Christ Jesus. With no ambiguity the *Watchtower* further declared that Jehovah's Witnesses,

> ...do not claim to be what the religious Hierarchy claims their religious organization to be, namely, the one holding the magisterium or teaching office and hence "the divinely appointed Custodian and Interpreter of the Bible."

When I read those statements of principle in 1946, I agreed with them wholeheartedly, and to this day I could support wholesouled any collective group that lived by those principles. I thought for a long time that I was doing just that. Certain persons have convinced me that this is not the case. They are the very ones who published those statements of principle.

The writer of the article on "Let God Prove to Be True" was Fred Franz. The article contained bold, clear, forthright statements, every one of which was, in essence, denied only eight years later by each of the three official Watch Tower witnesses in Scotland. They were also rejected point by point in *Watchtower* articles that followed. I did not appreciate how real that rejection was until my nine years spent on the Governing Body. Though it was not their aim, the Body members in general helped me to see that the principles of those bold statements made in 1946 were preached but never really practiced.

Searching back now, I can find nothing after 1946 that even approximates the strong stand for personal freedom asserted in the articles of that year. Why? What could cause such a change, such ambivalence, where an organization says one thing with such definiteness and apparent conviction and then, within a few years, takes a position that is diametrically opposed? Where they make the very same claims that they had earlier denounced in others as the product of a "hierarchical" spirit? How can men who are obviously devoted to a religious cause conscientiously take such a course and at the same time feel no need to give any explanation to their fellow members, no apology or even any refutation of the previous, powerfully stated position?

In part, it is doubtless due to the shifting moods, temperaments and viewpoints of the men themselves. This is particularly so since, during the period from 1942 to 1975 the administration was a very personal affair, centering primarily around two men, Nathan Knorr and Fred Franz, with the latter as the prime source of doctrine.[8]

But above and beyond the rather unpredictable, even unstable, nature of the attitudes and expressions proceeding from such a source, I believe that there is a more basic cause for the very strong authoritarian approach manifested. It all illustrates a *pattern* of human behavior, one that has been repeated down through the centuries with

8 As noted in *Crisis of Conscience* (page 102, footnote 16), Karl Klein in certain Governing Body sessions referred to Fred Franz as the "oracle" of the organization.

almost depressing regularity. It is the pattern of a group of people who leave an established religion or religions, who start out with the avowed determination that the Bible is and will be their sole definitive guide, their only true source of authoritative information; who then grow in numbers and in historical age as an entity, and who gradually produce a set of teachings that they now establish as the norm, the "Truth," the definitive test for measuring any person's Christianity. This is complemented by the parallel development of an authority structure to assure that all members hold to that set of teachings. In extreme cases, it may eventually come to prescribe what shall be read, studied, talked about, taught and practiced by all those adhering to that structure, which now assumes as its rightful authority the disciplining of any not holding to its humanly established norms. Such groups thus become very much like the established religions they originally left. This has been the pattern of development of many of the now-existing religions.

That perennial pattern is preceded by, and underpinned by, a still more basic factor, one that contributed to the subversion of the original Christian congregation, changing it from a brotherhood, united only by the bonds of love and a common agreement on essential beliefs, into a hierarchical system of religion, thoroughly institutionalized. That fundamental factor is simply the tendency of men to seek to impose their own will on others, a tendency against which Christ Jesus found it necessary to admonish his disciples repeatedly. That conclusion is, I believe, supported by both Scripture and history.

3

Centralized Authority

The chief priest, the scribes and elders confronted him in a body and asked him this direct question, "Tell us by whose authority you act as you do—who gave you such authority?"—Luke 20:1, 2, *Phillips Modern English.*

AUTHORITY WAS the issue lying at the crux of the conflict between Jesus Christ and the religious leaders of his day. They considered authority as centered in themselves and extending outward to those upon whom they chose to bestow it. They viewed Jesus as a threat to their authority structure. To them he was an outsider, a religious seditionist, undermining their position with the people. His teachings were heretical and dangerous because he failed to conform to the norms the elders had established, the interpretations the rabbinical teachers had developed for the community of the covenant people of God.

The same issue has arisen again and again throughout the centuries since. Remarkably, people who at one time have courageously resisted the "tyranny of authority," have often later been seduced themselves by its appeal to what seems "practical" from the human standpoint, or else by the opportunities it offers for power over others. When this happens, truth is replaced with specious reasonings and plausibility. Conscience gives way to expediency. Integrity is substituted for by pragmatism and the view that the end justifies the means.

During the years 1975 and 1976, the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses went through a stormy period, one that led to a complete restructuring of the top level of the organization's central administration. Monarchical control by a corporation president was replaced with control by a

collective body, the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses.[1] During that period I thought more seriously about the matter of authority than at any previous time. That authority existed in the Christian congregation was not something I questioned, for the Scriptures clearly used the term. But what *kind* of authority, to *accomplish what*, and with what *limits*? I had been assigned by the Governing Body to a committee of five members who were to make recommendations on the issue of organizational administration. That committee had me draw up their conclusions for submission to the Body as a whole. Texts that I included in that document kept coming to mind:

> But you are not to be called "Rabbi," for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. . . . Nor are you to be called "teacher," for you have one Teacher, the Christ.
>
> You know that in the world, rulers lord it over their subjects, and their great men make them feel the weight of authority; but it shall not be so with you. Among you, whoever wants to be great must be your servant.[2]

The more I thought the more convinced I became that anything that altered that relationship of brothers could not be genuinely Christian. Any titles or official positions that, of themselves, put some on a different spiritual level from others, or that in any way infringed upon the exclusive right of God's Son as the only Master and Teacher of his followers, must be, I felt, a deviation from the spirit of Christianity.

What of the designations found in the Christian Scriptures, such as "shepherd," "teacher," "prophet," "elder," and so forth? It seemed evident that these all actually described—not offices or official positions in an authority structure—but *services* to be rendered to the community of brothers, or *qualities* and *abilities* possessed that were to be used in benefit of others. The authorization such persons had to render these services did not make them spiritual heads over their brothers. For "the head of every man is Christ," no one else.[3]

Those services, qualities and abilities were to be directed toward helping people "grow up" as mature Christians, not to remain spiritual and mental infants, constantly dependent on others to think for them, to make decisions for them, and thus to be easily led from one shifting teaching to another.[4] They were to be childlike in their rela-

1 See *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 50 through 94.
2 Matthew 23:8, 10, *NIV*, Matthew 20:25, *NEB*.
3 1 Corinthians 11:3, *RSV*; compare 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 27-31.
4 Compare Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; Hebrews 5:12-14.

tionship to God and Christ, but not to men. The whole purpose of their associating congregationally was to promote their growth as "mature people" able to make their own decisions, "full grown" men and women who rightly need and recognize no other spiritual headship than that of the Christ.[5]

The apostle, in writing to Timothy, portrayed the Christian community in terms of a family relationship. (1 Timothy 5:1, 2) Those brothers who were elders in age and in Christian experience could rightly serve in a way similar to that of an older brother in a family. To illustrate, if a family head were away, his elder sons might be entrusted to keep before the family the instructions left by the family head, to urge adherence to his expressed wishes and instructions. But those elder sons could never presume to act as if they *were* the family head, the master of the house, as if they themselves possessed the right to establish rules of conduct for the family beyond what the family head had established and left for them. Nor could they ever properly expect or claim the deference and submission that properly belonged only to him. So it should be in the Christian family or household, which has Christ as its Head and Master, and with the instructions he himself gave, either personally or through his chosen apostles.[6]

I had thought that the "monarchical" arrangement prevailing in the organizational administration of Jehovah's Witnesses up until 1976 was largely responsible for the authoritarian atmosphere prevalent. However, after the major restructuring in 1975-76 it became evident that I was mistaken. I had sincerely hoped that the new arrangement would mark, or at least prepare the way for, a basic change of attitude and spirit, with emphasis on serving others, not an attitude of controlling them or dealing with them as subordinates. In time it became quite clear that the end result had essentially been only a dividing up and sharing of power, with a group of men acting as one man had done before. In effect, the inside of the house had been remodeled—but it was still the same house, its basic features little changed. The authoritarian structure, approach and attitudes of the past were still there, in fact still dominant.

Initially, the changeover from emphasis on one man, a president, to emphasis on a body of men was a somewhat refreshing change. As time went on, however, I found myself coming to feel almost a sense of revulsion at the term "Governing Body member." Those few of us who bore that "title" became the objects of ever greater deference and

5 Matthew 18:3; 23:9; 1 Corinthians 14:20; 16:13; Ephesians 4:14.
6 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 4:15, 16.

attention. I could not help but note that sometimes even in prayers at meetings, brothers were expressing their thanks "to God and to the Governing Body" for things received. It seemed that the role of Christ Jesus, the Master, instead of becoming more prominent (as hoped), had remained thrust into the background, as insufficiently significant to merit more than occasional mention. Holy Spirit as God's means for guiding, teaching and sustaining, rather than receiving greater recognition, seemed still far out of the picture, virtually never meriting mention in such prayers. Although the part I had played in that administrative restructuring had been the result of being assigned to do so by the Governing Body, I nonetheless felt disturbed over whatever responsibility I bore for what I saw.

In one Governing Body session, this issue came up in a rather indirect way, much as had the president's remark about it being 'preferable to have one of the Society's publications rather than to have just the Bible alone.' In this particular session, Karl Klein rather precipitously began criticizing Ed Dunlap, a member of the Writing Department and former Registrar of Gilead School, for having used the expression "central body of elders" in place of the title "Governing Body" in some material Ed had written. (Ed, not being a Governing Body member, was, of course, not present to respond to the criticism made against him.) About two years had elapsed since the time of Dunlap's writing the material and Klein had already brought the matter up in two previous sessions. He now spoke with strong feeling (even excusing himself for becoming quite loud and vehement and reminding his fellow members that 'his father had been a preacher during whose sermons no one ever slept'), and he expressed great concern over what he stated to be a subtle effort to eliminate the term "Governing Body." Various members made comments, generally of a moderate nature. Among them, I pointed out that I saw no reason for making an issue of the matter, and that in the Society's publications in French the standard translation for "Governing Body" is *Collège Central*, which in French means simply "Central Body." I went on to say that I personally would welcome some term other than "Governing Body" since it had the ring of a group of men ruling over others.

Klein's response was that he did not feel the points I and others had expressed carried weight and that the matter was indeed serious. Speaking with considerable force, he concluded: "What's wrong with the term 'Governing Body' anyway? That's what we *ARE*. We *DO* GOVERN!"

My thought at the time was, "Yes, that's what we are and what we do, but I wonder if it really should be this way?" The way Karl Klein had raised the matter, however, made Ed Dunlap more the issue than the term itself, and the Governing Body simply set the matter aside as requiring no particular decision.[7]

The sense of uneasiness I felt due to what I saw resulting from a number of Governing Body decisions moved me to do research into the history of Christianity in the early centuries. I knew that by the time of the Council of Nicea in 325 A.D.. matters had reached the point where a council of bishops, called together and presided over by the emperor of Rome, Constantine, could produce a creed to which all Christians everywhere were expected to subscribe. But what were the transitional factors that made possible the altering of the nature of the early Christian community, transforming it in a few centuries from a simple brotherhood into an authoritarian church system? Christ himself had founded the Christian congregation on himself and on his apostles and prophets.[8] Why, then, had it deviated—so far and so quickly—from the teaching and spirit that he and the inspired Christian apostles and prophets had conveyed? In doing research for certain subjects when working on the organization's Bible dictionary, *Aid to Bible Understanding*, some things had come to light, but the picture was only partial.

Reference works in the headquarters writing department's library helped fill out the picture. Reading from the writings of Christian authors of the second and third centuries, I was impressed by the heavy stress that certain men began to lay on *human authority* within the early congregation. The history of the period revealed, in the teachings advanced, *a gradual elevating of men to ever greater control and power* in congregational affairs, and a slow but constant movement toward *centralization of authority*.

The Governing Body of which I was a part based its claim to authority on the teaching that Christ himself had set up such a centralized authority structure. As the March 15, 1990 *Watchtower* (pages 11, 12) states:

> [7] While all anointed Christians collectively form God's household, there is abundant evidence that Christ chose a small number of men out of the slave class to serve as a visible governing body.

7 Karl Klein's comments recalled the expression of Grant Suiter some years earlier, when the issue of administrative control was under discussion. As related in *Crisis of Conscience*, page 87, he said in a quite heated manner, "if we are going to be a Governing Body, then let's get to governing! I haven't been doing any governing till now."

8 Ephesians 2:20-22.

The article goes on to claim that the twelve apostles initially formed this "governing body" and that:

> By the year 49 C.E. at the latest, the governing body had been expanded to include not only the remaining apostles but also a number of other older men in Jerusalem. (Acts 15:2) So the makeup of the governing body was not rigidly fixed, but God evidently guided things so that it changed to fit the circumstances of his people. Christ, the active Head of the congregation, used this enlarged governing body to settle the important doctrinal matter of non-Jewish Christians' being circumcised and submitting to the Law of Moses.

When stated in full, the claim is that after the Christian congregation extended beyond the limits of Jerusalem and Judea, such a governing body operated organizationally as a centralized authority, exercising direction internationally from Jerusalem over all those first-century congregations.

In neither Biblical nor religious history did I find anything to back up that claim. The "abundant evidence" the *Watchtower* refers to simply was not there. From the apostle Paul's blunt, forceful statements in his letter to the Galatians, it was clear that he did not consider Jerusalem to be the divinely appointed administrative center for all congregational activity earth wide. If such a Christ-appointed "governing body" had existed, surely following his conversion Paul would have contacted it promptly, submissively seeking its guidance and direction, especially so in view of the weighty responsibility conferred on him by Christ to be "an apostle to the Gentiles."[9] If such a "governing body" had existed, he certainly would have been concerned to coordinate his work with its members. To fail to concert his activity with, and submit to the direction of, a Christ-appointed "governing body" would have shown a grave "lack of respect for Theocratic order."

But Christ said absolutely nothing to Paul (Saul) about going to Jerusalem. Instead of sending him back to Jerusalem, from which city Paul had just come, Christ sent him on to Damascus. He gave what instructions he had for Paul through a Damascene resident named Ananias, clearly not a member of some Jerusalem-based "governing

9 Acts 9:15; Romans 11:13.

body."[10] From the very start of his letter to the Galatians, Paul himself took great pains to make plain that neither his apostleship nor his spiritual direction proceeded from or through men, specifically including apostolic men at Jerusalem.[11] He stressed the fact that after his conversion he did not turn to some human seat of authority, saying:

> I did not go at once into conference with flesh and blood. Neither did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles previous to me, but I went off into Arabia, and I came back again to Damascus [in Syria].[12]

It was not until t*hree years later* that Paul made a trip to Jerusalem. And he states specifically that at that time he saw only Peter and the disciple James, but no others of the apostles during his fifteen-day stay. He was therefore at no "headquarters seminar" receiving instructions in some kind of daily sessions directed by a "governing body." Just how seriously he viewed this issue is seen by his saying, "look! in the sight of God, I am not lying."[13]

Thereafter Paul made his base in Antioch, not Jerusalem. He engaged in missionary journeys and it was the congregation of Antioch that sent him out, not Jerusalem. Even though he was relatively close to Jerusalem (Antioch is in the coastal region of Syria), it was a very long period of time before Paul saw any reason or occasion for a return to that city. As he says, "Then *after fourteen years* I again went up to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking also Titus along with me. But I went up as a result of a revelation."[14]

From the description given, this may have been at the time of the council on circumcision and law-keeping, recorded in Acts chapter fifteen. Paul states that he went to Jerusalem then only "as a result of a revelation." This shows that Christians did not *customarily* and *routinely* look to Jerusalem as a seat of centralized authority for all Christian congregations, the place where questions of any and all kinds were decided upon. It took a divine revelation to cause Paul to make this particular trip there.

The account of Acts chapter fifteen shows *why* Jerusalem was the logical place to go for this particular issue. The account nowhere indicates that Jerusalem was the location of some kind of international administrative body. Rather, it was primarily because *Jerusalem itself was the source of the troublesome problem* that Paul and Barnabas had encountered in Antioch where they were

10 Acts 9:1-17; 22:5-16.
11 Galatians 1:1, 10, 11.
12 Galatians 1:16, 17.
13 Galatians 1:18-20.
14 Galatians 2:1, 2.

serving. Things had been relatively peaceful in Antioch until "men from Jerusalem" came down and caused trouble by their insistence that Gentile Christians should be circumcised and keep the Law.[15] The Christian congregation had had its beginning in Jerusalem. Judea, with its capital of Jerusalem, was where strong adherence to law-keeping prevailed most intensely among persons professing Christianity, that attitude continuing even for years after this particular council was held.[16] The troublemakers in Antioch were Jerusalem-based men. These factors, and not solely the presence of the apostles, made Jerusalem the natural site for discussion and settlement of the particular problem. The presence of divinely selected apostles was obviously a factor of weight. Yet that circumstance was due to end as the apostles died and left no successors—no one with apostolic gifts and authority. So the situation at the middle of the first century involved factors that were not of a permanent or continuing nature and thus that are simply not applicable in our time.

Moreover, the fact remains that, *even when the apostles were alive and in Jerusalem*, the apostle Paul clearly did not view that apostolic body at Jerusalem as a "governing body" in the sense of an international administrative center, a "headquarters organization." Fred Franz, in his talk as vice president at the September, 1975, Gilead graduation exercise, had explained this very clearly from Scripture.[17] As the quotations from his talk presented in *Crisis of Conscience*show, when discussing Paul and Barnabas' return to Antioch from a missionary journey, he exclaimed:

> Well, is it the body of apostles and of other elders of the Jerusalem congregation that summoned them up there and say, "Look here! We have heard that you two men have gone out on a missionary tour and finished it and you haven't come up here to Jerusalem to report to us. D'YOU KNOW WHO WE ARE? WE ARE THE COUNCIL OF JERUSALEM. DON'T YOU RECOGNIZE THE HEADSHIP OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST? If you don't come up here in a hurry, we're going to take disciplinary action against you!" Is that what the account says? Well, if they had acted that way toward Paul and Barnabas because they reported to the congregation [which was in Antioch, not Jerusalem] by means of which the holy spirit had sent them out, then this council of apostles at Jerusalem and other elders of the Jewish congregation would have put themselves above the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

15 Acts 15:1, 2, 5, 24.
16 Compare Galatians 2:11-14; Acts 21:15, 18-21.
17 See *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 76 through 83. An audiocassette (or CD) of the entire talk is available through Commentary Press.

Throughout his entire talk, it is notable that, although he spoke of the "governing bodies" of various modern church organizations, the vice president made no reference to a "governing body" as existing in the first century. Instead he consistently used such expressions as the "Jerusalem council" or the "apostolic body." Those terms are, in reality, far more accurate than the expression "governing body" for describing what actually existed and occurred in Jerusalem. The account, in fact, indicates that it was not some small group of men with special administrative authority who met together in secret session to make a decision. Instead, the record indicates a gathering of considerable size, an assembly of Jerusalem elders, with the whole congregation eventually expressing its approval with regard to at least certain aspects of the decision reached. The circumstances there do not remotely resemble the arrangement in effect today within the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses and its Brooklyn-based Governing Body.[18]

The vice president at that time argued against the concept of a governing body with all-pervasive authority. I seriously doubt that he (later the corporation president) would have repeated that particular talk or argument—not because it was wrong, but because the organizational circumstances had changed and were not the same as they were in that year of administrative upheaval, 1975. The obvious aim of his talk back then as specific statements therein show, was to uphold the authority of the corporation known as the Watch Tower Bible & Tract

18 Acts 15:6, 12, 22. The March 15, 1990 *Watchtower* referred to grossly manipulates the evidence to fit the thesis it argues for. On page 10 it shows a picture of the supposed "first-century governing body" with only nineteen or twenty men present. It also (on page 12) speaks of Christ as adding "a number of other older men in Jerusalem" to the governing body. But the account in Acts chapter fifteen indicates that the elders as a whole were present at the council held and not just "a number" of them, for it consistently speaks of the "apostles and the elders" with no limitations implied. Some 3,000 persons had been baptized at Pentecost and not long after the number of believers is given as "about five thousand." (Acts 2:41; 4:4) That was evidently in the year 33 A.D. How reasonable is it to believe that 16 years later, in 49 A.D., there were only a handful of elders in Jerusalem? Surely the number of them would have packed out the room depicted in the *Watchtower*'s picture. But this would not fit the cocept of a "small number of men" forming a governing body, such as the dozen men who currently form the Brooklyn-based Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses. The magazine also presents a totally false picture as to a supposed formation of a "governing body" among Watch Tower adherents in the late 1800s. As shown in *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 58-61, initially Charles Taze Russell, not a governing body, exercised full control over the Watch Tower Society. Until his death in 1916, he was recognized as the one and only "pastor" of all the "ecclesias" and that is why he was regularly referred to as "Pastor Russell." The article likewise totally misrepresents the real situation regarding administrative control existing in the 1970s, as pages 72-110 in *Crisis of Conscience* document. It would seem that the writer of the 1990 *Watchtower* articles was either ignorant of the facts or was guilty of deliberate fabrication.

Society (which he frequently mentioned in very positive terms), and also the authority of the corporation president, defending them against what he apparently viewed as an attempted "takeover" by the members of the Governing Body. His effort in that regard was unsuccessful. But the validity of the Scriptural argument he advanced as to the first century circumstances remains the same.

He clearly showed that the one isolated event of the Jerusalem council (recorded at Acts chapter fifteen) is no proof of the existence of a governing body possessing all-embracing authority toward Christians everywhere. He argued that even as Antioch had acted without consulting or receiving approval from Jerusalem, so the Watch Tower corporation and its president could act without consulting or receiving the approval of the Governing Body. The problem was that none of this harmonized with the published teachings of the organization or with statements he himself had made earlier in speech or in writing.[19]

The published statements and position of the organization since have simply ignored the arguments and evidence given in that 1975 talk by the vice president (later the president) of the Watch Tower Society. I seriously doubt that the majority of the Governing Body members even recognized the significance of the Scriptural evidence advanced. Listening to them afterward, it was apparent that they did not comprehend how the points the vice president had made really undermined the whole concept of a governing body with complete control over all congregations and the Christians forming them. Along with them, Fred Franz, later the Society's president, by then evidently shelved or discarded the position argued for in his talk. Not because the Scriptural evidence was ever refuted. It simply was not compatible with the course the organization has decided upon. It must bend and accommodate to what the authority has decided.

Weighing that position back then, it seemed evident to me that if a "governing body" had existed as a central administrative body in the early congregation then there should be some evidence beyond just a single meeting in Jerusalem to support this. Nowhere in the rest of the Scriptures did this appear. In all the writings of Paul, Peter, John, Luke, Jude or James, not one indication could be found that men in Jerusalem, or any centralized body of men, exercised supervisory control over what went on in the rest of the many places where Christians were located. Nothing to indicate that

19 See *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 57 through 79.

the activities of Paul or Barnabas or Peter or any other person were carried out under the direction and supervision of a "governing body." When the Jews revolted against Roman imperial rule and Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 A.D., where did the supposed Christian "governing body" operate from thereafter? Again, it seemed reasonable that there should be at least some indication of this if it was indeed God's arrangement, if such a centralized administrative body was the divine instrument of Christ Jesus for directing his congregation earth wide.

The only Scriptural writings subsequent to Jerusalem's fall evidently are those of the apostle John. He apparently wrote them all toward the close of the century, hence decades after Jerusalem's destruction.[20] None of his letters gives the slightest hint of a centralized administrative body operating toward Christians in his day. In the book of Revelation, his visions portray Christ Jesus as sending messages to seven congregations throughout Asia Minor.[21] In none of these messages is there any indication that such congregations were under some outside direction other than Christ's own. There is no sign of any direction by Him through some earthly, visible "governing body."

Writings of early Christian authors of the second and third centuries are available for scrutiny, but these likewise reveal nothing to indicate the existence of any centralized administration for supervising the numerous Christian congregations. The history of the period reveals something quite to the contrary. It shows that such a centralized authority base was the product of a *post-apostolic* and *post-Biblical* development. By a gradual process covering centuries of time this eventually resulted in the kind of centralized control by a visible organizational leadership that the Watch Tower's concept of a "governing body" embraces.

The Development of Centralized Control

While the historical sources are not numerous, the evidence indicates that the first stage of centralization came with a change of view, actually a distortion, of the role of the bodies of elders or "presbyters" (the Greek term for "elder" being *presbyteros*). In place of being viewed simply as elder brothers serving among brothers, as in a family, the claim came to be made that these elders occupied a special relationship with God and Christ, distinct from and superior to that of the rest of their fellow Christians. In

20 *Insight on the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pages 93, 94), for example, lists the probable date of John's gospel account and his three letters as about 98 A.D.

21 Revelation chapters 1 through 3.

describing the original state of affairs in the Christian congregation, Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*, page 124, makes this acknowledgment:

> The New Testament knows no spiritual aristocracy or nobility, but calls all believers 'saints,' though many fell far short of their vocation. Nor does it recognize a special priesthood in distinction from the people, as mediating between God and the laity. It knows only one high-priest, Jesus Christ, and clearly teaches the universal priesthood, as well as universal kingship, of believers.

Each Christian had a *personal* relationship with God through Christ as High Priest, without any other human intervening or being needed to serve as mediator. For each Christian was himself part of a "royal (kingly) priesthood."[22]

Christian elders had Scriptural authority, true. It was, however, authority to *serve*, not to subordinate others; to assist, counsel, even reprove, but never to dominate or dictate to. Where error arose, the way to deal with it was by refutation, by truthful argumentation, by persuasion, never by coercion or intimidation—the tyranny of authority.[23] "For you have only one Master and you are all brothers."[24] That principle given by the Master himself must be kept ever in mind when reading *any* statement found in the Christian Scriptures.

At Hebrews chapter thirteen, verse 17, for example, the exhortation is given:

> Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among you and be submissive [defer to them, *NEB*], for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will render an account; that they may do this with joy and not with sighing, for this would be damaging to you.

Does this imply a virtual automatic submission to direction from persons taking the lead? No, for Christ's injunction was not simply against being *called* "leaders," but against anyone's assuming to exercise the *position* or *office* of leader, assuming to exercise that kind of *authoritarian control*.[25] Of the Greek word (*peithomai*) from which comes the rendering "be obedient," the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Abridged Edition) page 818 says:

> This word has such senses as 'to trust,' 'to be convinced,' 'to believe,' 'to follow,' and even 'to obey.'

22 1 Peter 2:5, 9; 5:3; Revelation 1:6; 5:10; 20:6.
23 Matthew 20:25-28; 23:10, 11; 2 Corinthians 1:24; Titus 1:9-13; 1 Peter 5:1-5.
24 Matthew 23:8, *NIV*.
25 Matthew 23:10, *NW*, *TEV*.

Note that the rendering "to obey" is only one of several possible translations and here is listed last. The inspired writer of Hebrews has, in fact, already qualified matters by making plain that what "those taking the lead" were to be speaking was, not their own views or interpretations or injunctions, but "the word of God." (Hebrews 13:7) As the well-known Bible scholar Albert Barnes observes, the term "those taking the lead" (or, in many translations "leaders") actually carries the sense of "guides," or teachers who serve as guides and shepherds.[26] As long as the guidance given harmonized with the teaching of Christ, and as long as the shepherding manifested his spirit, a positive response would be the right and good course, for it would be submission to his teaching. Even in matters not specifically dealt with in Scripture, the Christian would cooperate freely insofar as compliance was not contrary to his or her conscience. But there is nothing indicating an automatic, subservient, even unquestioning submission, as to a superior authority with the right to *command* obedience, with the threat of expulsion hanging over any who fail to comply.

As has been seen, the basic sense of the Greek term used (*peithomai*) itself implies that the Christian's compliance would come as a result of first having 'trusted,' having been 'convinced,' and having 'believed' what proceeded from such Christian brothers and on that basis he or she would respond positively. As Christian brothers and sisters, they had drawn together in a voluntary association of believers, and it is a free and willing response that is urged here, on the basis of kind consideration—because it will make the shepherding efforts of such men more joyful, and because to do otherwise would bring no advantage to themselves, the ones served. It is not rendered as an obligation which some organizational "authority" had the right to exact of them.

A Growing Emphasis on Human Authority

Even as the apostle had foretold, some elders gradually lost sight of the principle stated by the Master governing all Christian relationships.[27] Instead of giving full emphasis to the unique authority of God and Christ, the evidence is that they now began to emphasize more and more their *own* authority (constantly reminding the congregations, of course, that this authority was derived from God and Christ).

Why were they successful in doing so? For the simple reason that many persons, perhaps most, prefer to let others bear the re-

26 *Barnes' Notes* (Hebrew to Jude), pages 317, 322.
27 Acts 20:28-30.

sponsibility that is rightly their own. They even take a certain pride in having over them men of power. That is true today and it was true then. Thus, to persons in Corinth who boasted in men who presented themselves as some sort of "super-apostles," Paul wrote:

> If a man tyrannizes over you, exploits you, gets you in his clutches, puts on airs, and hits you in the face, you put up with it. And we, you say, have been weak! I admit the reproach.[28]

With regard to these words, one Bible commentator says:

> The idea is, doubtless, that the false teachers set up a lordship over their consciences; destroyed their freedom of opinion; and made them subservient to their will. They really took away their Christian freedom as much as if they had been slaves. . . . the false teachers really treated them with as little respect as if they smote them on the face. In what way this was done is unknown; but probably it was by their domineering manners, and the little respect which they showed for the opinions and feelings of the Corinthian Christians.[29]

The apostle John gives an example of the way this attitude of self importance had already surfaced in his lifetime. He writes of a certain Diotrephes, describing him as one "who loves to be first" and who expelled from the congregation those who did not conform to his position.[30] Generally, however, the process seems to have begun with a quite subtle elevation of human authority. In the writing of Ignatius of Antioch (who lived from approximately 30 A.D. to 107 A.D., dying as a martyr), we begin to find exhortations like these:

> And be ye subject to the presbyters [elders], as to the apostles of Jesus Christ. Your presbyters [preside] in the place of the assembly of the apostles. [Be] subject to the presbytery [body of elders] as to the law of Jesus Christ.[31]

This, in effect, robed the elders with authority equivalent to that of the apostles and equated subjection to them with subjection to Christ's law. But the fact is that they were not apostles, they had not been chosen as such by God's Son, hence they did not have apostolic authority and it would be a mistake to view them in that light. Such admonitions actually were subtle extensions of certain exhortations found in Scripture, they had a plausible sound to them, but they carried serious implications. Viewing matters from the

28 2 Corinthians 11:20, 21, *NEB*.
29 *Barnes' Notes* (1 Corinthians to Galatians), page 232, 233.
30 3 John 9, 10.
31 Ignatius' "Epistle to the Trallians," chapter II; "Epistle to the Magnesians," chapter VI; the same epistle, chapter II.

standpoint he set out, Ignatius argued that anyone doing anything without the approval of the overseer and the body of elders and deacons "is not pure in conscience."[32]

Teachings such as these mark the early beginnings of a clergy-laity distinction. They also mark the equally subtle invasion of personal conscience by human religious authority. The men urging ever greater submission to such authority did not, as others had previously done, endeavor to establish legalistic control through advocating the imposition of circumcision and adherence to the Mosaic law. But though their methods differed, the final result was an equally dangerous erosion of the Christian freedom of people as individuals.[33]

A Monarchical Arrangement

A further step in this process of developing a visible centralized authority was the elevation of one member of the body of elders to a superior position, a status of greater authority than his fellow elders.

The evidence (which was also presented in the Watch Tower publication *Aid to Bible Understanding*) is that originally the terms "overseer" (*episkopos*) and "elder" (*presbyteros*) were interchangeable, one describing function, the other the mature quality of the person. It may, of course, have been the customary practice for one of the elders to act as a sort of chairman at their gatherings and discussions. In time, however, it was decided to have one man among the elders hold preeminently the position of "overseer," so that eventually the term came to apply solely to this individual, not to all elders. Why was this done?

32 Ignatius, "Epistle to the Trallians," chapter VII.

33 Respected nineteenth-century church historian Augustus Neander in his work *General History of the Christian Religion and Church*, pages 194 to 201, points out the way in which the Christian church, in many respects, did revert to Old Testament positions. In place of a universal priesthood of *all* believers, a separate priesthood gradually appeared, distinct from the main body of Christians, and acting in a mediatorial way for it in its relation to God. Tertullian (c. 145-220 A.D.) even referred to the congregational overseer or "bishop" as the "chief priest," as he also refers to those not among the overseers, elders or deacons, as "laymen." ("On Baptism," Chapter XVII.) On the effects of this, Neander comments: "This title presupposes that men had begun already to compare the presbyters [elders] with the priests; the deacons, or the spiritual class generally, with the Levites. . . . When the idea of the universal Christian priesthood retired to the background, that of the priestly consecration which all Christians should make of their entire life, went along with it. . . . Christ had raised the entire earthly life to the dignity of a spiritual life. . . . the new notions respecting the dignity of the clerus [meaning, the selected or appointed ones], led men to believe that what had hitherto been regarded as the free gift of the Spirit to all or to individual Christians, must be confined to a particular office in the service of the church. . . . Now, the free working of the Spirit was t be confined to a formal, mechanical process."

The concentration of greater authority in a single individual was evidently viewed as a "practical" step, one that could be justified by circumstances as a means to a proper end. Jerome, who made the first translation of the Bible into Latin by about 404 A.D., confirms this. First acknowledging that originally elders and overseers were the same, he then says:

> . . . gradually all the responsibility was deferred to a single person, that the thickets of heresies might be rooted out.[34]

The introduction of false teachings, as perhaps also the waves of persecution being experienced, caused the elders to feel it practical to concentrate more authority in the hands of a single person, who now became THE overseer, the sole overseer among the elders. Since the term "bishop" is derived from the Greek word for "overseer" (*episkopos*), this marked the start of the office of bishop. It is true that there were different erroneous viewpoints and teachings surfacing in the congregations of Christians. Had those rendering shepherding service relied on Scriptural truth, including the teachings of Christ and his apostles, as the spiritual weapon for combating these, they would have demonstrated faith in the power of truth to 'overturn reasonings and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God,' as the apostle Paul expresses it. Instead, men now turned to a fleshly weapon, resorting to *an elevation of human authority* as the means to maintain Christian unity and, supposedly, doctrinal purity.[35]

In this regard, Ignatius had urged overseers, "Have a regard to preserve unity, than which nothing is better."[36] The appeal unfortunately took the focus away from love and truth as the means to unity, directing it rather to submission to religious leaders. Thus we find Ignatius' writings advancing the view that unity with God was dependent upon 'harmonious cooperation with the Overseer.'[37] As one eminent scholar observes, the office of bishop (overseer) now came to constitute "a visible centre of unity in the congregation."[38]

All of which reminds one of the human reasoning that led Israel, faced with internal problems and external attacks, to seek a

34 Jerome, as quoted in Lightfoot's commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians, pages 229, 230.

35 2 Corinthians 10:4, 5.

36 Ignatius' "Epistle to Polycarp," chapter I; his words were clearly echoed by Hayden C. Covington in the Scotland trial discussed in Chapter 2 of this book, for this Watch Tower representative there stated that it was the organization's purpose to have "unity at all costs," even if this meant an "enforced acceptance" of its teachings.

37 Ignatius' "Epistle to the Ephesians" chapter VI; "Epistle to the Trallians," chapter II. In his "Epistle to the Philadelphians," chapter III, he writes: "For as many as are of God and Christ are also with the bishop [overseer]."

38 Lightfoot's commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians, pages 234, 235.

king as a visible head around whom to rally and to whom to look for direction. God, though granting them Saul as king, characterized their action as a rejection of His own invisible rulership, as an act owing, not to faith, but to a lack of faith. He warned them of the burden this would mean for them, the limitations it would place on their freedom. But they persisted in their desire for visible rulership over them.[39] The same lack of faith continues to cause persons to this day to desire and look for some "visible center of unity," rather than by faith focusing on the invisible headship of Christ Jesus.

The bonds uniting Christians initially had been their common faith and hope, their mutual love as members of the Christian family. They had gathered together in their individual cities and towns as free individuals, not dominated or controlled by any overarching authority structure. Within half a century of the death of the apostles, this was now radically changing. The direction in which the church was going in the second century A.D., and the forces moving it in that direction, are set out in Schaff's history:

> . . . the whole church spirit of the age tended towards centralization; it everywhere felt a demand for compact, solid unity; and this inward bent, amidst the surrounding dangers of persecution and heresy, carried the church irresistibly towards the episcopate [congregational government by a single overseer]. In so critical and stormy a time, the principle, union is strength, division is weakness, prevailed over all. . . . Such a unity was offered in the bishop [overseer], who held a monarchical, or more properly a patriarchal relation to the congregation. In the bishop was found the visible representative of Christ, the great Head of the whole church. . . . In the bishop the whole religious posture of the people towards God and towards Christ had its outward support and guide. [40]

Calls for *loyalty* and *submission* to this visible authority were voiced by various early Christian writers. In the Clementine Homilies, the following is said to an overseer:

> And your work is to order what things are proper, and that of the brethren is to submit, and not to disobey. Therefore submitting they shall be saved, but disobeying they shall be punished by the Lord, because the president [the presiding overseer] is entrusted with the place of Christ. Wherefore, indeed, honour or contempt shown to the president is handed on to Christ, and from Christ to God. And this I have said, that these brethren may not be ignorant of the danger they

39 1 Samuel 8:4-20.
40 Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, pages 56, 57.

> incur by disobedience to you, because whoever disobeys your orders disobeys Christ, and he who disobeys Christ offends God. [41]

This simplistic reasoning—that the presiding overseer represented Christ and that therefore *whatever he instructed* should be received as though it came from Christ—exercised coercive force over congregation members, shackling them. It notably fails to qualify the exhortation by including the question of whether the overseer's instructions harmonized with those of Christ or were, instead, contrary to Christ's instructions. In the latter case they deserved to be disobeyed. Even though not *directly* contrary, they might deserve to be questioned as instructions that nonetheless went *beyond* what the Scriptures required and therefore that could be submitted to or not as personal conscience and judgment might dictate. This authoritarian injunction was an apparent attempt to clothe imperfect humans with honor that belongs only to the perfect Master. If accepted in the absolutist form in which it is stated, with the subsequent suppression of personal judgment, it would make persons the disciples of men, followers of men, even as the apostle Paul had forewarned.[42] However plausible or appealing the argument, it was pernicious, the result of perverted thinking. Yet virtually the identical argument is used in much the same way and with the same effect to this day.

A similar call for implicit congregational obedience to, and reverential respect for, human authority, is found in Ignatius' writings, in the early second century, as he employs this argument:

> For we ought to receive every one whom the Master of the house sent to be over his household, as we would Him that sent him. It is manifest, therefore, that we should look upon the bishop [the sole overseer] even as we would upon the Lord himself.[43]

Compare this second-century exhortation regarding submission to the bishop with these words (I have underlined the critical words):

> To abandon or repudiate the Lord's chosen instrument means to abandon or repudiate the Lord himself, upon the principle that he who rejects the servant sent by the Master thereby rejects the Master.

41 "The Clementine Homilies," Homily II, chapter 66, 70. Though attributed to Clement of Rome, the Clementine Homilies are of uncertain authorship and date, though evidently of no later origin than the third century A.D.

42 Acts 20:30.

43 Ignatius' "Epistle to the Ephesians," chapter VI.

The latter quotation is from the twentieth century, from the May 1, 1922, edition of the *Watch Tower*, which sought thereby to induce loyalty to the teachings of the first Watch Tower president, Charles T. Russell. The material went on to say:

> Then to repudiate him and his work is equivalent to a repudiation of the Lord, upon the principle heretofore announced.[underlining mine]

Eighteen centuries intervene between the writings of Ignatius and that of the Watch Tower. Yet the argument is identical; the same plausibility of reasoning, the same pernicious effect of making persons the followers of humans. The same argument continues to be used today. The only difference is that loyalty to Russell is now transferred to "the organization," presented as "the Lord's chosen instrument" which can be disobeyed only at the cost of being guilty of repudiating Christ. It is somehow thought that because such high authority and honor is assigned to a collective group rather than to an individual, this makes it proper. This is specious reasoning which, even as was true in the second century, succeeds in influencing many, who seem unable to discern its fallacy.

Ignatius, equating obedience to the bishop [*overseer*], the presbyters [*elders*], and the deacons with obedience to Christ "who has appointed them," correspondingly said that disobedience to them was also 'disobedience to Christ Jesus.' He allows for no possible right motive in failure to conform, saying:

> For he that yields not obedience to his superiors is self-confident, quarrelsome, and proud.[44]

This negative labeling of any not conforming to the dictates of religious authority also has its twentieth-century correspondences, with virtually the same language employed. Speaking of those who disagree with the Watch Tower Society's claims concerning Christ's "presence" since 1914, the *Watchtower* of August 1, 1980 (pages 19, 20) describes them as "adopting a law-defying attitude toward 'the faithful and discreet slave,' the Governing Body of the Christian congregation and the appointed elders," and then says of anyone disagreeing with that "theocratically appointed" authority:

> 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

44 Ignatius' "Epistle to the Ephesians," chapter V.

> purposes. He develops a *spirit of independence*, and becomes "proud in heart . . . something detestable to Jehovah." (Prov. 16:5)

These are, again, words remarkably similar to those of Ignatius in his effort to magnify the importance of episcopal authority.

In Ignatius' writing, the burden of submissiveness was placed unequally on the congregation members. The reasoning employed again ignored the prior responsibility resting on any man who claimed to be a representative of Christ to demonstrate personally his own full submission to Christ by presenting the Master's own message, unadulterated by human additions and alteration. The responsibility rested on him to supply the proof that what he gave as instruction to the congregation was genuinely from God and Christ, founded firmly on the inspired Scriptures. Such representatives could not be "examples to the flock" unless *they themselves* showed humility, modesty and lowliness of mind, rather than simply demanding it of others.

Reviewing this whole process of escalating emphasis on human authority, Biblical scholar Lightfoot observed:

> It need hardly be remarked <u>how subversive of the true spirit of Christianity, in the negation of individual freedom and the consequent suppression of direct responsibility to God in Christ</u>, is the crushing despotism with which this language, if taken literally, would invest the episcopal office.[underlining mine] [45]

The evidence is that such words have indeed been taken literally, both in the past and in modern times, with resulting denial of individual freedom and suppression of a sense of direct, personal responsibility to God and Christ on the part of the individual.

The inclination was now to view "appointed" men as bearing much of that responsibility for them. With increasing vigor Christians of the post-apostolic period were being urged to believe that the way to stay in God's good graces was simply to be submissive to, and stay in harmony with, the overseer or bishop and the congregation leaders. These men, professing to represent God and Christ, should be trusted and followed as one would trust and follow the apostles of Christ, yes, as one would trust and follow Christ himself. When they spoke, it was as if God had spoken. The need for t*esting* all teaching, for arriving at *individual conviction of truth*, for exercising *individual Christian conscience* and the need to feel a keen sense of *personal responsibility* to God for one's beliefs, acts and

45 Lightfoot's commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians, page 237.

course—these were played down in favor of emphasis on submission to the constituted human authority, the "visible center of unity."

How much, then, Christians of that time needed to keep close to heart the apostle's exhortation:

> It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.[46]

From Centralized Congregational Authority to Centralized International Authority

The post-apostolic centralizing process began as an internal congregational matter with the formation of a monarchical episcopacy, but it did not end there. It went on to become inter-congregational. This step was accomplished as a result of the presiding overseers (bishops) of different cities beginning to meet together in a conference or council. This is often referred to in history as a "synod" (a term which one dictionary defines as referring particularly to "a religious governing body").[47] The propriety of such councils or synods was based upon the account in Acts chapter fifteen and the council in Jerusalem there described.

That account, however, did not lay the foundation for any holding of such synods on a regular basis, nor for the establishment of a permanent council to render decisions on doctrinal and congregational matters as a form of religious court. In his commentary, nineteenth-century scholar Barnes points this out, saying;

> This council has been usually appealed to as the authority for councils in the church as a permanent arrangement, and especially as an authority for courts of appeal and control. But it establishes neither, and should be brought as authority for neither. For, (1) It was *not* a court of appeal in any intelligible sense. It was an assembly <u>convened for a special purpose; designed to settle an inquiry which arose in a particular part of the church</u>, and which required the collected wisdom of the apostles and elders. (2) It had none of the appendages of a *court*. . . . Courts of judicature imply a degree of authority which cannot be proved from the New Testament to have been conceded to any ecclesiastical body of men. (3) <u>There is not the slightest intimation that anything like permanency was to be attached to this council, or that it would be periodically or regularly repeated</u>. It proves, indeed, that when cases of difficulty occur—when Christians are perplexed and embarrassed, or when contentions arise—<u>it is proper to refer to Christian men for advice and direction. . . . but the example of the</u>

46 Galatians 5:1, *NIV*.
47 *The Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (1975 Pocket Edition), under "synod."

> council summoned on a special emergency at Jerusalem should not be pleaded as giving divine authority to these periodical assemblages. . . . (4) It should be added that a degree of authority (comp. ch. xvi.4) would of course be attached to the decision of the apostles and elders at that time which cannot be to any body of ministers and laymen now. Besides, it should never be forgotten—what, alas! it seems to have been the pleasure and the interest of ecclesiastics to forget—that neither the apostles nor elders asserted any jurisdiction over the churches of Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia; that they did not claim a *right* to have these cases referred to them; that they did not attempt to "lord it" over their faith or their consciences. The case was a single, specific, definite question referred to them, and they decided it as such. . . . they enjoined no future reference of such cases to them, to their successors, or to an ecclesiastical tribunal. They evidently regarded the churches as blessed with the most ample freedom, and contemplated no arrangement of a permanent character asserting a right to legislate on articles of faith, or to make laws for the direction of the Lord's freemen.[48]

The evidence bears out the points above expressed, all of which demonstrate the frailty of the Watch Tower position regarding a permanent and continuing "governing body" functioning down through the years. Had there been some kind of centralized "governing body" already operating from the start of Christianity onward, such councils would not be anything new, would not be an innovation. If the council involving Jerusalem and Antioch described at Acts chapter fifteen was to be an ongoing example and policy, then even after Jerusalem's fall in 70 A.D. such councils would have continued. To the contrary, Schaff's *History of the Christian Church*, page 176, states:

> . . . we have no distinct trace of Councils before the middle of the second century. . . when they first appear.

Thus it is at least *one hundred years* after the events of Acts chapter fifteen that we first have evidence of another such council being held.

History shows, moreover, that these councils were originally open to any congregational members, the people of the community where the council was held being able to attend and in some instances to make their influence felt. In time, however, attendance at and participation in the synods became restricted. Schaff says:

48 *Barnes' Notes* (Acts, Romans), page 235. In view of Barnes' affiliation with the Presbyterian Church his candor on these points is all the more notable. Even though that denomination has a permanent synod called the "General Assembly" he did not hesitate in showing that such an arrangement is a matter purely of church choice, not something divinely authorized.

> But with the advance of the hierarchical spirit, this republican spirit [that is, the allowing attendance, not only of bishops or overseers, but also of elders and ordinary congregation members] gradually vanished. After the council of Nicaea (325) bishops alone had seat and voice. . . . The bishops, moreover, did not act as representatives of their churches, nor in the name of the body of believers, as formerly, but in their own right as successors of the apostles.[49]

Initially sporadic, the councils gradually became more frequent and their authority, in the forms of decisions reached, received heightened emphasis.

By the time of Cyprian (A.D. 200-258), these synods or councils and the conclusions, policies and positions arrived at, were stressed as vital. Cyprian maintained that the unity of the Church consisted in the unanimity of the overseers or bishops.[50] The presiding overseer or bishop eventually becoming the sole participant of his congregation at the council, he thereafter conveyed the council's decisions to the congregation members. As Lightfoot notes, the bishop or overseer had become the "indispensable channel of divine grace."[51]

Any not accepting what came through this "channel" were denounced by Cyprian, who said that they were guilty of the sin of "Korah, Dathan and Abiram," who rebelled against Moses and Aaron.

Compare this approach with the following:

> We must show our understanding in these matters, appreciating our relationship to the visible theocratic organization, remembering the fate of those like Korah and Achan and Saul and Uzziah and others who forgot the theocratic order.

These words in the February 1, 1952, issue of the *Watchtower* magazine (page 79) mirror the language of Cyprian.[52] Lightfoot notes that Cyprian used Old Testament analogies (like that of Korah) again and again in his arguments and he observes that such claims "are urged moreover . . . as absolute and immediate and unquestionable." This means that Cyprian did not need to *prove* that his analogy was correctly applied, that these persons were indeed doing the same as those rebels of Moses' time—he only needed to make the assertion that this was so and all were expected to agree.

49 Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, page 178.
50 "The Treatises of Cyprian," Treatise I, paragraph 5.
51 Lightfoot's commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians, page 243.
52 See also the *Watchtower*, September 1, 1982, page 13.

This too finds a precise parallel in the modern-day organization of Jehovah's Witnesses. Identical analogies are applied to any failing to conform to the organizational "channel's" pronouncements and, in words like those of Ignatius, nonconformists are portrayed as "self-confident, quarrelsome and proud." The organization merely needs to say that an analogy with rebellious persons of the past applies and all are expected to believe that this is so.

Salvation Only In and Through the Religious Organization

The congregation or church was now seen, not in the simplicity of a brotherhood, united by common faith and mutual love, but as a religious institution with defined boundaries, beyond which institutional boundaries one could not move without disastrous consequence. Thus Cyprian wrote:

> He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother. If anyone could escape who was outside the ark of Noah, then he also may escape who was outside the church.[53]

In this way, the Scriptural teaching that salvation results from faith in the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ was now added to, enlarged upon, extended beyond what the Scriptures themselves say. No one could be saved, it was now said, who was not within the church organization, subject to the overseer or bishop. The exclusive role of God's Son as the means of salvation was no longer exclusive. Men now entered into that role; the overseers and the church institution or organization shared Christ's life-giving role as also being essential for salvation.

Words now came to take on a different meaning. The Greek term *ekklesia*, generally rendered "church" or "congregration" in translations, simply means "an assembly or gathering." In common usage in the Christian Scriptures it referred simply to a gathering of persons who met together as fellow believers. They were an "assembly" because they *assembled* or gathered together. With the exception of the initial period when they were still welcome in synagogues, the gathering was done principally, in fact almost exclusively, in private homes.[54] It was the *act* of assembling or

53 The Treatises of Cyprian, Treatise I, paragraph 6; Schaff (*History of the Christian Church*, page 174) comments, "The Scriptural principle: 'Out of Christ there is no salvation,' was contracted and restricted to the Cyprianic principle: 'Out of the (visible) church there is no salvation.'" Watch Tower publications use *virtually the same argument* as Cyprian with his reference to being in the "ark" in their arguing for salvation's depending on one's being within the "visible organization" and its "spiritual paradise." Compare *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, pages 192, 193; the *Watchtower*, November 1, 1974, pages 667, 668.

54 Romans 16:5; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2.

congregating that made them a congregation, not formal *membership* in some constituted or "organized" group. The term *ekklesia* referred to them as a gathered people, an assembly of people, either locally or viewed as a collective body forming the people of God, the assembly of the firstborn.[55] They were a "community," that is, a people having common interests that joined them.

While the term did not cease to be used in these senses, in the following centuries a different meaning came into play. As the quotations already made from the period show, the term "church" (*ekklesia*) came to refer in fact to the *religious authority* expressed in the men who exercised ever greater control over those congregating. Loyalty to the "church" now meant, not simply loyalty to the Christian *community*, but more particularly loyalty to the leadership and its direction. Similarly, when the "church" spoke, it was not the *community* speaking but the *religious authority* speaking.

All of this represented a subtle, though substantial, change in focus as to the duty of Christian loyalty and adherence. It changed the focus from the *head*, Christ, to the *body*—or, in reality, to those professed members of his body who were more vocal, who claimed to speak with authority for the body. It is not that Christians should not feel deep concern for their fellow body members, for they should all "have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it."[56] But what assures this united spirit is primarily loyalty and adherence—not to the segment of professed body members who have gained positions of control—but to the genuine Head, to Christ.Where that proper loyalty and adherence is strong, the Christian will never fail in showing care for his fellow body members.

The effect of the change wrought in the early post-apostolic period is clearly evident today. Though all drawn directly from the Greek *ekklesia*, such words as our English term "ecclesiastical," and the terms for "church" in French, Spanish, Italian (*église, iglesia, chiesa*), for example, rarely convey to people's minds the idea of an assembly of persons but rather that of a church *organization* (or else a church *building*). In the following chapter, we will see how this same alteration has played a major role

55 Acts 13:1; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 16:1, 19; Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18; Hebrews 12:23.

56 1 Corinthians 12:25, 26

in the shaping of the outlook of Jehovah's Witnesses as to their loyalty and adherence.

An International Organizational Headquarters

Despite the periodic councils held, there still existed no one centralized direction over the Christian congregations, no international "governing body" exercising authoritative control over all Christians in all places. But it eventually came.

The same motivation that had earlier led to a monarchical arrangement in the congregation, with one member of the body of elders becoming the sole Overseer (or bishop)—someone around whom the congregation could unite as a "visible center of unity"—and which later led to the holding of synods or councils for a particular area, now "pressed on towards a visible center for the whole church," on an international basis.[57]

The councils of overseers initially exercised influence only over a particular area, province or region. However, with the holding of the Council of Nicea (325 A.D.) a universal, all-embracing aspect began to appear. The emphasis on human authority that had first begun as something intra-congregational and thereafter was inter-congregational, ultimately became international. The Nicene Council was convoked by the (unbaptized) Roman emperor Constantine, principally to produce a unified position among Christian bishops (overseers) with regard to the relationship between Christ and God, arguments over which were sharply dividing many. The issue was not as to Christ's *divinity*, an accepted fact, but whether he should be identified with the *supreme* divine, the Sovereign of heaven and earth. Of the occasion, Socrates (380-450 A.D.), a lay historian wrote:

> The situation was exactly like a battle fought by night for both parties seemed to be in the dark about the grounds on which they were hurling abuse at each other.[58]

Church historian Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 260-339), states that by the direct personal intervention of Constantine in the council deliberations a formula was adopted declaring that Jesus was "begotten not created, one in being [Greek *homoousios*] with the Father." Revealing the power that the decision of this international body now had, Yale University historian Jaroslav Pelikan, in his book, *Jesus Through the Centuries*, page 53, writes:

57 Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, page 155.
58 Socrates' *Ecclesiastical History*, I. 23, quoted in *The Rise of Christianity*, by W. H. C. Frend, page 498.

> Once the Council of Nicea had accepted these formulas, they became the law not only for the church but for the empire.

According to Socrates' *Ecclesiastical History*, 1.9, to the church of Alexandria (Egypt) Constantine wrote that "the fearful enormity of the blasphemies which some were shamelessly uttering concerning the mighty Savior, our life and hope," had now been condemned and suppressed; "for that which has commended itself to the judgment of three hundred bishops cannot be other than the doctrine of God."

It says something about the mindset that had developed among professed Christians that they would accept and believe this, believe that simply because a large number of religious leaders voted as a governing body in favor of a certain position this assured its being right, made it in fact "the doctrine of God." Yet the same mindset prevails today, even with less impressive numbers involved.

The centralization process led in time to the formation of a Catholic (meaning "universal") church and the formation of a central church government. The process was helped along by the political power of the Roman empire.[59]

It took a few centuries, but the constant insistence that unity of belief and harmony of action made imperative each progressive increase of human authority eventually produced the final result: *direction and control of congregations internationally from a centralized authority*. It also opened up an ever-increasing number of positions of prominence as each successive step in the development produced additional areas and levels of authority, ultimately a hierarchy.

The proclaimed goal of uniformity of belief could now be accomplished, the price being the loss of individual Christian freedom. Questions as to the Scripturalness of certain teachings, rules or arrangements could now be overcome, not by the convincing power of truth, but by the crushing application of authority.

The eighteenth-century scholar quoted at the beginning of this chapter, having pointed out that *authority* had been the means that Jews and Gentiles had used to fight against the good news in the first century, goes on to say that, ironically,

> . . . when Christians increased into a majority, and came to think the same method to be the only proper one for the advantage of their cause which had been the enemy and destroyer of it, then it

59 This centralization later was affected by a struggle for dominance and supremacy of authority between the western segment of the church, represented by Rome, and the eastern part thereof, represented by Constantinople. Today such division is seen between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox Church.

> was the *authority* of Christians, which, by degrees, not only laid waste the honor of Christianity, but well-nigh extinguished it among men.[60]

The authority to serve and to build up was perverted into authority to subordinate, to control, to dominate, a process destructive not only of Christian freedom but of the very spirit of Christianity and of the Christian brotherhood.

When discussing, against the background of history already presented, the position of any man who serves a congregation in any capacity, scholar Lightfoot observes that, throughout Scripture,

> . . . his office is representative and not vicarial. He does not interpose between God and man in such a way that direct communion with God is superseded on the one hand, or that his own mediation becomes indispensable on the other.[61]

Which is to say that men can never properly claim that, 'Because we are undershepherds of Christ you should treat us as if we were the Shepherd himself; you should not question our instructions any more than you would his. It is through *us* that you have relationship with God and Christ and you should therefore remain submissive to *our* direction in all things if you desire God's approval and blessing. Be grateful to us for whatever we give you and be quiet.' To say that is to go directly contrary to the apostle Peter's urgings to fellow elders, saying:

> Not tyrannizing over those who are allotted to your care, but setting an example to the flock. And then, when the Head Shepherd appears, you will receive for your own the unfading garland of glory. . . . Indeed, all of you should wrap yourselves in the garment of humility towards each other, because God sets his face against the arrogant but favours the humble.[62]

Every individual Christian has the obligation to assess the genuineness of whatever message is presented to him. He must make a personal decision as to its validity, doing this no matter what claims may accompany the message, no matter with what trappings of authority it may come. This is obvious from Jesus Christ's own words when, speaking of his true sheep, he said:

> . . . the sheep follow him [the true Shepherd], because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they

60 *McClintock and Strong's Cyclopaedia*, Volume I, page 553, under "Authority."
61 Lightfoot's commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians, page 267.
62 1 Peter 5:3-5, *NEB*.

> will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice.[63]

Clearly, the "sheep" must *themselves* judge whether it is genuinely Christ Jesus who is talking to them in the message they hear. The exaltation of men, with accompanying authoritarian speech, dogmatism, and a legalistic approach that suppresses tolerance and compassion, will rightly have a foreign sound to the "sheep" when presented by persons claiming to represent their Shepherd. Rather than take the view sometimes heard today, "Even if wrong, go along," Jesus said that his sheep would put whatever distance they could between themselves and those who, by a domineering approach, show themselves to be strangers to the spirit of Christianity. There is sound reason for avoiding these, since the lessons of history leave no question as to the inborn tendency of men to seek to impose their will and their way upon others, thereby supplanting to one degree or another the will of God and his good Shepherd.

Summarizing what history reveals, Lightfoot writes:

> The Apostolic ideal was set forth, and within a few generations forgotten. The vision was only for a time and then vanished. . . . From being the representatives, the ambassadors, of God [men] came to be regarded His vicars [that is as His substitutes, standing in his place].[64]

I personally believe that this development, with its exaltation of human authority and concentration of such authority, is related to the apostle Paul's expressions about the appearance of a "man of lawlessness," as recorded in Second Thessalonians chapter two, verses 3-12. Of that "man" he writes (*NIV* rendering):

> He opposes and exalts himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, and even sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

I see no reason to believe that the coming of this "man" predicts the appearance of one particular, surpassingly lawless, individual any more than the "woman" called "Babylon" refers to a particular woman. Nor do I believe that the fulfillment of the "man of lawlessness" is found in any one religious system. The term "man" here would seem to refer to a type or archetype, descriptive of all persons manifesting the characteristics of that type.

63 John 10:4, 5, *NEB*.
64 Lightfoot's commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians, page 268.

Paul's expression about the coming of such a "man" is much like John's statement "you have heard that the antichrist is coming," and that the man denying Jesus is the Christ "is the antichrist."[65] The context shows that John does not limit the term to any one individual but applies it to all who fit the description. So, too, it would seem with the "man of lawlessness."

There could be no greater "lawlessness" than that of attempting to infringe upon, even usurp, the position and authority of the Sovereign God. And that is what the evidence shows religious men have done, not only in past history but in the present as well. Since the Father has vested "all power and authority" in Jesus Christ, and has ordered that "all should honor the Son even as they honor the Father," any attempt at occupying Christ's position and exercising the headship that rightfully pertains only to him would qualify as lawlessness of equally grave nature.[66]

In what way, then, can it be said of any doing this that they 'sit in the temple claiming to be God'?

The temple at Jerusalem was the symbolic dwelling place of God, the place where he dwelt among his people, presiding over them, giving his laws and responses to them. The Christian congregation since has become God's temple, his people among whom he dwells.[67] The sitting in the temple by the "man of lawlessness" would apparently indicate his claiming the right to exercise divine authority in the Christian congregation like that exercised by God in his temple in Jerusalem, acting as though he were the source from which authority proceeds.

Of his 'exalting himself over everything called God' and even claiming "to be God," Biblical scholar Barnes writes:

> Any claim of a dominion over conscience; or any arrangement to set aside the divine laws, and to render them nugatory [inconsequential or inoperative], would correspond with what is implied in this description. It cannot be supposed that any one would openly *claim* to be superior to God, but the sense must be that the enactments and ordinances of the "man of sin" would pertain to the province in which God only can legislate, and that the ordinances made by him would be such as to render nugatory the divine laws, by appointing others in their place . . . . This does not necessarily mean that he actually, in so many words, claimed to be God, but

65 1 John 2:18, 22, *NIV*.
66 Matthew 28:18.
67 Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Peter 2:4, 5.

that he usurped the place of God and claimed the prerogatives of God. [68]

The key issue is clearly that of *authority* and an arrogation of authority that rightly belongs only to God and his Son. Whenever men call upon others, whether openly or by implication, to accept their own word and their religious rulings—teachings and rulings which are not clearly stated in Scripture—as if these came from God, then they would surely seem to manifest the characteristics of the "man of lawlessness." In 1980, while still a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, I had a conversation with a member of a Branch Committee exercising oversight of a major country of Europe. In the course of the conversation he mentioned that he had once begun to prepare an article to submit for publication by the Watch Tower on the subject of the history of the development of a hierarchy. He said that he got part way along and then decided to stop. When I asked why, he replied, "The similarity was too obvious."

How obvious is the similarity? Is the modern-day organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, as claimed, a true mirror of the Christian congregation in apostolic times, or is it instead a reflection of the developments of post-apostolic times as seen in the historical records just discussed? Consider the pattern that the history of the organization centered around the Watch Tower Society reveals.

68 B*arnes' Notes* (Ephesians to Philemon), pages 82-84. While Barnes would apply this identification primarily to the Catholic Papacy, there is certainly reason to view the matter as of far broader application.

4

The Recurring Pattern

Who makes you, my friend, so important? What do you possess that was not given you? If then you really received it all as a gift, why take the credit to yourself?—1 Corinthians 4:7, *New English Bible.*

THE FOUNDER and first editor of the *Watch Tower* magazine, Charles Taze Russell, was not unaware of the history of the deviation of the early Christian congregation from an original simple brotherhood into an institutionalized religion with a centralized authority structure.

Supporters of his magazine then were not known as "Jehovah's Witnesses" but simply as "Bible Students." Congregations (then called "Ecclesias") were autonomous and the congregation where Russell presided, first in Pittsburgh and later in Brooklyn, was viewed simply as a model that could be followed or not according to choice.[1]

Very early in its publication, in fact just two years after the first issue, the *Watch Tower* presented a view of the Christian congregation as established by Jesus Christ. Under the title "The Ekklesia" (Greek for "congregation") an 1881 article showed that Russell was not "fearful" of using the term "organization." At one point he says of the first Christians that "they were organized and bound together as members of one society, and as such had laws and government, and consequently a head or recognized ruling authority." This might sound much like the concept of organization advocated by the Watch Tower organization today. What he actually says, however, is very different.

1 See *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, pages 23-25.

He nowhere indicates that Christians should be under the direction and control of an *earthly centralized administration or authority*, one with claims on their submission. The *bonds* uniting its members were not organizational ties. Their *unity* was not based on a form of organizational loyalty and submission. The *law* governing them did not include organizational rulings. It was an organization that kept *no earthly lists* of names. The absence of the concept of an earthly authority structure is apparent throughout.

This is what the Watch Tower president said in 1881:

> They were organized and bound together as members of one society, and as such had laws and government, and consequently a head or recognized ruling authority. The bonds were *bonds of love* and common interest. Since all were enlisted under the captaincy of Jesus, the hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, and aims of one were those of the other; and thus they had a far more perfect union of heart than could possibly be had from a union on the basis of any man-made creed. Thus their organization was of the Spirit; their law for the government of each was love, and all as a whole were put under obedience to the "law of the Spirit," as it was expressed in the life, actions, and words of their Lord. Their government was the *will* of him who said, "If ye love me keep my commandments."
>
> Thus we see the early church organized, governed, and in perfect unity and harmony under the rulership or *head*ship of Jesus. Contrast this *church organization* with what now affects to be a continuance of the same—viz.: the various denominational organizations, each of which binds its members to a mental union on the basis of some creed or dogma of its own (many of them anything but (*love*-ly) and each having its own laws.
>
> These laws emanate from their heads or rulers and law-givers; so it is clearly seen that these present day churches have and recognize as heads, or directing, ruling powers over them the ancient founders of their various creeds while their clergy in conferences, councils, synods and presbyteries, interpret and enforce the "traditions of the elders," which "make void the Word of God." These take the place of the true head of the church—Jesus and the true teacher and guide into all truth, the Holy Spirit. Hear the Prophet Isaiah express it, (chap. 9:15).

> This brings us to our second proposition, viz.: that all Christians should be joined to this organization. In the light of what has just been said as to the class constituting the church which Jesus organized, it is evident that if you have given up all your will, talent, time, etc., you are recognized by Jesus as a follower, and member of the *ekklesia*, or body of which he is the head, whose names are written in heaven. Thus we join Jesus' church and have our names recorded as members, by consecration. But says one: Must I not join some organization on earth, assent to some creed and have my name written on earth? No, remember that Jesus is your pattern

and teacher, and neither in his words nor acts will you find any authority for binding yourselves with creeds and traditions of the elders, which all tend to make the word of God of none effect (Mark, 7:13) and bring you under a bondage which will hinder your growth in grace and knowledge, and against which Paul warned you to "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled with the yoke of bondage." (Gal., 5:1.)

But say some: If it is not proper to unite with any of the present nominal churches, would it not be well to form a visible organization of our own? Yes, this is what we have—an organization modeled after that of the early church. We think we have come back to primitive simplicity: The Lord Jesus alone is our head or lawgiver, the Holy Spirit is our interpreter and guide into truth; our names are all written in heaven; we are bound together by love and common interest.

Do you inquire—How shall we know one another? We reply, How could we help knowing one another when the Spirit of our Master is made manifest in word and act, and manner and look? Yes, the living faith, the unfeigned love, the long-suffering meekness, the childlike simplicity coupled with the constancy and zeal of maturity, make manifest the sons of God, and we need no earthly record, for the names of all such are written in the Lamb's book of life.

According to that *Watch Tower*, Christ's true congregation differed from all existing religious organizations, each with its distinctive set of teachings that all must adopt in order to be recognized members; each with its leaders who meet in conference to establish laws peculiar to their particular organization and who enforce these rulings upon all adherents, so that they thereby "take the place of the true head of the church—Jesus, and the true teacher and guide into all truth, the Holy Spirit." The publishers of the *Watch Tower* declared their return to the "primitive simplicity" of the first century congregation, whose organization was of the Spirit, whose law was love, whose only government was the will of him who said, "If you love me keep my commandments." They were bound, said the *Watch Tower*, not by organizational ties and standards of human origin, but "by love and common interest." The next year, in April of 1882, they again affirmed that they had no creedal "fence" within the bounds of which members were obliged to stay, and which excluded from fellowship any who did not subscribe to a prescribed set of teachings. Having at that time no distinctive name, and simply referring to themselves as "Bible students," here is what they then preached:

Ques. Please let me know by what name you people call yourselves? What denomination?

Ans. We are strictly unsectarian, and consequently recognize no sectarian name, believing with Paul, (read 1 Cor. 3:1-4) that where one saith I am of Paul, and I of Apollos,

or I am a Baptist, or I a Methodist, etc., it is an evidence of *carnality*, and consequently in opposition to the Spirit of Christ. Did Paul or Apollos die for us? If so, let us call ourselves theirs. Were we baptized into the Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, or other denominational churches? If so, we *are* members of it, and should be properly recognized by those names. But if we were baptized into the one body or church of which Jesus is the one and only Head, then we are *members* in particular of his body, and the only name appropriate would be his; Scripturally called the "Church of Christ," "Christians," "Church of the first born," and such like general names. Again we would remark that ours is the only Scriptural basis of Christian *union*, viz: We have no creed (fence) to bind us together or to keep others out of our company. The Bible is our only *standard*, and its teachings our only *creed*, and recognizing the progressive character of the unfolding of Scriptural truths, we are ready and prepared to add to or modify our *creed* (faith—belief) as we get increase of light from our *Standard*.

We are in fellowship with all Christians in whom we can recognize the Spirit of Christ, and especially with those who recognize the Bible as the only standard. We do not require, therefore, that all shall see, just as we do in order to be called Christians; realizing that growth in both grace and knowledge is a gradual process. Nor do we see reason to expect that any but the *watchmen* of Zion will "see eye to eye" (Isa. 52:8.) until that which is perfect is come, when "that which is in part shall be done away." (1 Cor. 13:10.)

If all Christians were to thus free themselves of prescribed creeds, and study the Word of God without denominational bias, truth and knowledge and *real* Christian fellowship and unity, would result. The Spirit of the Head would pervade the unfettered members of the body, and sectarian pride would vanish.

It did not take long, however, for human reasoning to suggest something more "practical." The question was raised if it would not be good to have an "earnest, aggressive organization" (built, *of course*, "upon Scriptural lines"!) to accomplish more effectively the preaching of the good news? The *Watch Tower* in March, 1883, presents the question and the answer:

Q. "Would not an earnest, aggressive organization (or sect), built upon Scriptural lines, be the best means of spreading and publishing the *real* Good Tidings? We must have fellowship and sympathy. Union is strength. It is not the skirmishers that win the battle, but the disciplined and solid battalions."

A. We believe that a visible organization, and the adopting of some particular name, would tend to increase our numbers and make us appear more respectable in the estimation

of the world. The natural man can see that a visibly organized body, with a definite purpose, is a thing of more or less power; therefore, *they esteem* the various organizations, from which we have come out, in obedience to the Master's call. But the natural man cannot understand how a company of people, with no organization which they can see, is ever going to accomplish anything. As they look upon us, they regard us simply as a few scattered skirmishers—a "peculiar people" —with very peculiar ideas and hopes, but not worthy of special notice.

But, though it is impossible for the natural man to see our organization, because he cannot understand the things of the Spirit of God, we trust that you can see that the true Church is most effectually organized, and in the best possible working order. (See the plan of our organization, as stated in October issue, under the caption "The Ekklesia.") The Apostle Paul urges all to unity of faith and purpose (Phil. 3:15, 16—*Diaglott.*) All led by the *same Spirit* may and do come to a knowledge of the *same truth.* Under our Captain, all the truly sanctified, however few or far separated in person, are closely united by the Spirit of Christ, in faith, hope and love; and, in following the Master's command, are moving in solid battalions for the accomplishment of his purposes. But, bear in mind, God is not dependent upon numbers (See Judges 7, as an illustration).

Recognizing this organization, which is of the Spirit, and desiring no assimilation whatever with the worldly, who cannot see or understand it, we are quite willing to bear the reproach of a peculiar people. We always refuse to be called by any other name that that of our Head—Christians—continually claiming that there can be no division among those continually led by his Spirit and example as made known through his Word.

The view that a strong visible organization was desirable was thus portrayed as the product of fleshly thinking, typical of the "natural man" who seeks numerical growth, who admires the power that a visible organization with its own distinctive name can generate. It was thus typical also of the unspiritual man who "cannot understand how a company of people, with no organization which they can see, is ever going to accomplish anything." The only organization they belonged to, these Bible students again affirmed, was a spiritual one, "invisible to the world." There was nothing to "go and see" to impress people with any organizational bigness and efficiency and strength and ownership of property and buildings. In place of organizational unity, unity of spirit was the proclaimed goal. They were encouraging people to free themselves from denominational religions with their visible organizations. So how, they asked, could they call on others to do this if they did not do it themselves?

It was, therefore, misleading for the *Watchtower* magazine of March 1, 1979, under the heading "Modern Day Theocratic Organization," to quote from a February, 1884, issue of the *Watch Tower* as though the quotation supported the *existing view* of organization prevailing among Jehovah's Witnesses. Notice how the material (page 16) prefaces its quotation so as to allow for this idea:

> [16] The aforesaid congregation earnestly sought to prove worthy of being Jehovah's visible organization and his instrument. So it kept free from any alliance with the sectarian organizations of Christendom, as well as from the political organizations of this world. Voicing itself in this regard, that Christian congregation said, in the issue of February 1884 of its official magazine *Watch Tower:*
>
> > "New readers in all parts of the country are constantly inquiring: By what *names* do you call yourselves? Are you 'Primitive Baptists'? Are you 'Missionary Baptists'? Are you 'Universalists'? Are you 'Adventists'? Are you 'Primitive Methodists'? etc., etc. We have several times tried to make clear our position, and now endeavor in a few words again to do so.
> >
> > "We belong to NO *earthly organization;* hence, if you should name the entire list of sects, we should answer, No, to each and to all. We adhere only to that *heavenly organization*—'whose names are written in heaven.' (Heb. 12:23; Luke 10:20.) All the *saints* now living, or that have lived during this age, belonged to OUR CHURCH ORGANIZATION: such are all ONE Church, and there is NO OTHER recognized by the Lord. Hence any earthly organization which in the least interferes with this union of saints is contrary to the teachings of Scripture and opposed to the Lord's will—'that they may be ONE.' (Jno. 17:11.)"

In an attempt to explain away beforehand the statement "We belong to NO *earthly organization*," the writer of the March 1, 1979, *Watchtower* presents this as if it referred only to separateness from "sectarian organizations of Christendom, as well as from political organizations." They *were* separate from these—though the thought of "political organizations" does not even come into

the discussion; its insertion by the later *Watchtower* writer is simply the drawing of a "red herring" over the trail, diverting attention from the actual significance of the statements. In the blunt statement, "We belong to NO *earthly organization*," the "NO" plainly means *none*, not just none of the sectarian ones but none that *they themselves* had set up. They clearly taught that to set up such an organization themselves, with its own authority structure and its own distinctive name, would be to create yet another sectarian system. The only organization they belonged to was the "*heavenly organization*" whose members' names are written in heaven. This is made evident by the context. In the following paragraphs, not quoted by the 1979 writer, the 1884 article contained these points:

> **By what name may this Church be called? We answer, By the name of its *founder* and *instituter*—Christ. Hence it is the "Church of Christ" or "Church of God," for God founded it on the *Rock* Christ Jesus; or "Christians," as they were known in early times. (Acts 11:26; 26:28, and 1 Pet. 4:16.) But because Paul and the other disciples were not followers of Calvin's teachings, therefore they were not called Calvinists; because they were not followers of Luther's teachings and example, therefore they were not called Lutherans; but because they followed the ONE example and teachings of CHRIST only, therefore they gladly acknowledged it when they were called "Christians."**
>
> **What think you, do we not occupy the *only ground for union?* Or suppose that all man-made creeds, and forms, and prayer-books, and liturgies, and names were laid aside, or that all Christians met in the one name of Christ, and in earnest simplicity studied HIS words under the direction of God's Spirit and the explanations furnished in the Apostle's writings, would there long be serious differences even of opinion in the Church?**
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> ---
>
> **And so, by whatsoever names men may *call us*, it matters not to us; we acknowledge none other name than "the only name *given* under heaven and among men"—Jesus Christ. We call ourselves simply CHRISTIANS and we raise no fence to separate from us any who believe in the foundation stone of our building mentioned by Paul: "That Christ died for *our sins* according to the Scriptures"; and those for whom this is not broad enough have no right to the name Christian.**

This makes quite clear that Russell and his associates did not then present an exclusivistic viewpoint, as if considering themselves the only Christians. They rejected the narrow viewpoint that would deny the Christianity of other religious persons because of their not coming within some organizational "fence." Any who believed in the foundation truth "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" would not be denied the name "Christian" by them.

That this is the meaning of their statements is obvious from earlier issues of the magazines, several of which have already been quoted. An openness to others beside themselves as fellow "Christians" is expressed, for they had said "We are in fellowship with all Christians in whom we can recognize the Spirit of Christ, and especially with those who recognize the Bible as the only standard. We do not require, therefore, that all shall see just as we do in order to be called Christians; realizing that growth in both grace and knowledge is a gradual process."[2] The 1979 *Watchtower* writer who looked up the 1884 quotation reasonably should have seen these other statements. If so, he would have known that the use he made of the quotation was misleading, contrary to fact.

That this attitude continued is seen a decade later, when the September 15, 1895, issue the *Watch Tower* stated in quite blunt terms the attitude toward human organization. Responding to inquiries from those wanting advice as to the most profitable way to conduct group meetings, it presented this as one of its initial points:

> (2) Beware of "organization." It is wholly unnecessary. The Bible rules will be the only rules you will need. Do not seek to bind others' consciences, and do not permit others to bind yours. Believe and obey so far as you can understand God's Word today, and so continue growing in grace and knowledge and love day by day.)

These were the early statements, the early positions.[3] How then did such a remarkable metamorphosis take place, producing an almost complete reversal of position, one that prevails to this day? In the 1980s, Ron Frye, a former circuit overseer and a Witness for 33 years, having spent "years of agonizing" over the Watch Tower's teaching as to its authority, did intensive research into its validity. Contrasting the past and the present, he wrote:

> Today, more than a hundred years from Russell's start, the Witnesses are outstandingly organization-minded. The organization always comes first. In the *Watchtower* of March 1, 1979, the article "Faith in Jehovah's Victorious Organization" the expression "theocratic organization" appears *fifteen times* in just the first

2 The *Watch Tower*, April 1882, quoted on pages 71, 72.

3 When the book *The New Creation* was published in 1909 the viewpoint of organization remained as has been presented. It said, for example: "The test of membership in the New Creation will not be membership in any earthly organization, but union with the Lord as a member of his mystical body; as saith the Apostle, `If any man be in Christ, he is a New Creature . . .'"

eleven paragraphs.[4] This kind of mesmerizing repetition is constantly used by the Society to condition Jehovah's Witnesses to think that it is wrong for them to question anything the Society ever published as truth. In contradiction to this attitude toward the organization, Russell and his early associates were actually anti-earthly organization.

As to what may have motivated such an "anti-earthly organization" attitude at that initial stage, Frye continues:

> Now the antagonism which Russell had toward churches with a history is understandable. He was, after all, a religious maverick. His small group of followers were without an organizational history. They sought to minimize the absence of that lack of history by arguing that God did not have an on-going earthly organization—a monolithic, Christian congregation —that it was not God's way of doing it. In this way Russell's adherents could bring down in their own eyes those religions that *did* have an earthly history and could explain away their own *lack* of one.
>
> And, in connection with the subject at hand, it is abundantly clear that Russell did not believe that God had on earth at that time an '1800-year-old faithful and discreet slave organization'—God's earthly channel of communication. He did not find it nor did it find him. He and his associates had no fellowship with any existing organization and were in fact disdainful of all other association. They stoutly repudiated the idea that there was on earth a visible, earthly organization existing from Pentecost onward that one would have to identify with in order to serve God.
>
> But today, a hundred years later, the descendants of the Bible Students of Russell's movement argue the other way around, that it is necessary to be looking to a visible, earthly organization, namely, [that associated with] the Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society. That was not the position in the beginning. As the situation changed, so Jehovah's Witnesses changed their arguments. They argued just as strongly one way *against* organization at one time as they now argue strongly *for* organization.
>
> Just as their perception of earthly organization was far different a hundred years ago from what it is today, so their view of Russell is far different today from what it was in the beginning. Apart from brief references to him from time to time, Russell for the most part is unknown to modern day Witnesses. His writings are not recommended reading nor are his many books any longer published by the very publishing house he established and endowed with his own money.

4 The term "Theocratic organization" has been used since the December 1, 1939 *Watchtower* in particular.

> Yet here was a man whom, Jehovah's Witnesses still argue, God used to revive the great teachings of Jesus and his apostles. Why don't they study his books today in the congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses, even from a historical standpoint? Because much of it, if not most of it, would be considered heresy today.

That there is a basis for such an assessment can be seen in what did happen while Russell was yet alive. If one looks back over the various quotations earlier presented in this chapter, it may seem difficult to believe that the man who was the source of them all was the same man who in 1910—when he had become recognized by thousands of persons internationally as their "Pastor," when the *Watch Tower* magazine he had founded had attained a history of three decades, and when his writings were circulating by the thousands of copies in many nations—now said that the person who read the Bible alone without using the *Scripture Studies* he had written would, according to experience, 'go into darkness within two years,' whereas the one reading his *Scripture Studies* without reading any of the Bible itself would still be "in the light" at the end of that time. Though a man might spend "weeks and years" in personal Bible study without the use of Russell's writings, "the chances even then are that when he does light on something he will have it all wrong."[5]

There were qualifying remarks made in connection with these claims. Nonetheless, the fact remains that the ability of the individual Christian to understand God's Word by personal study was deprecated and the whole thrust was to represent the Watch Tower publications as God's exclusive channel for light and truth. It is difficult to conceive of a more immodest, sectarian attitude, to conceive of a sadder departure from the lofty principles earlier advocated.

Nor was the attitude a onetime, momentary expression. That it had been developing is evident from material published in the *Watch Tower* the year previous, 1909. In its October 1 issue, Russell, the founder and editor of the magazine, the sole "Pastor" recognized by the Bible Students, discussed Matthew chapter twenty four, verse 45, and its reference to "that servant" and his "fellow servants." Using, as he commonly did, the editorial "we" in place of "I," he acknowledged that fourteen years earlier the term "that servant" (referring to the faithful and wise servant of the parable) had been applied to him by another Watch Tower affiliate (actually his wife, according to the July 15, 1906 issue of *Zion's*

5 See the copy of this material in Chapter 2, page 31.

Watch Tower) and that he had not entered into the discussion that developed over this application. But he states that the person who had first applied this designation to him now asserted that "while we did occupy such position we have forfeited it, lost it to a successor." He then presents a discussion of the issue but does it indirectly by the method of presenting first what his "friends" say and then what his "opponents" say, limiting his own direct comments to the close. He presents his "friends" as saying:

> **Our friends insist that this Scripture indicates that in the end of this Gospel age the Lord would use not many channels for the dissemination of the truth, but one channel, and that it would be the privilege of others of the Lord's faithful ones to be "fellow-servants" (co-laborers). They insist that the facts connected with this harvest time abundantly substantiate this interpretation. They hold that all of them received their knowledge of present truth directly from the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society's publications, or indirectly through those who have received their enlightenment through this channel. They are glad correspondingly to co-operate as "fellow-servants" with the Society's work, believing that thereby they are following the leadings of the divine providence, as well as the instructions of the divine Word. They believe that such as do otherwise, oppose the divine word, antagonize the harvest work, and will bring injury upon themselves.**
>
> ---
>
> **They declare that, to their judgments, there is no other interpretation of the facts before us than that presented in our Lord's promise; that at the appropriate time in the end of the age, in the time of his presence, he would bring forth from the storehouse of Grace, Wisdom and Truth things "new and old," and that he would select at that time one special channel through which those blessings would be called to the attention of the household of faith—indicating also that a privilege would be granted to others who might join the service as "fellow-servants." They point out that such as have thus become "fellow-servants" have been blest and used in the harvest work, whilst others opposing have gone into the "outer-darkness" of nominalism as respects "harvest" truth and its service.**

It must be remembered that the *Watch Tower* was Russell's own magazine. He started it, he controlled it, he determined what went into it as its sole editor.[6] It was essentially a vehicle for his writings. Previous to his death, in a "last will and testament" he stated that, while he had donated the magazine to the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society (a corporation which he also controlled as by far

6 The *Watch Tower*, December 1, 1916, page 356.

the dominant shareholder), this was done "with the explicit understanding that I should have full control of all the interests of these publications during my life time, and that after my decease they should be conducted according to my wishes."[7] So, when he speaks of attitudes toward the magazine or the Society, or applies the term "channel" to the Society or the magazine, he is actually referring these things to himself in the most personal sense. The entire context of the article confirms this. That he was the only one recognized as "Pastor" adds force to this application. He had earlier referred to himself as "God's mouthpiece" and "agent" for revealing truth.[8] So, when he speaks of the "one channel" through which persons (his "friends") had received their enlightenment, he clearly means the writings of Charles Taze Russell. He shows this also by saying that "it would be the privilege of others of the Lord's faithful ones to be 'fellow servants' (co-laborers)" with this "one special channel" chosen by the Lord.[9]

That this is so is clearly evident from statement after statement appearing in the *Watch Tower* magazine in the years following Russell's death. Giving a totally different picture from the very slanted version modern *Watchtower* material presents, the March 1, 1923, *Watch Tower* quotes Russell as saying that some spoke of him as the "faithful and wise servant" and others spoke of the Society as such. The magazine then adds:

> Both statements were true; for Brother Russell was in fact the Society in the most absolute sense, in this, that he directed the policy and course of the Society without regard to any other person on earth.

In fact, a biographical issue of the *Watch Tower* published after his death on October 16, 1916, stated:

> Thousands of the readers of Pastor Russel's writings believe that he filled the office of "that faithful and wise servant," and that his great work was giving to the household of faith meat in due season. His modesty and humility precluded him from openly claiming this title, but he admitted as much in private conversation.[10]

7 This will and testament is presented in full in the "Appendix" of *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 356, 357; his total control of the Watch Tower Society is documented on pages 53, 54, of that publication.

8 The *Watch Tower*, July 15, 1906, page 229; see *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 53, 54, for photocopy.

9 It is worthy of note that when the December 15, 1981, *Watchtower* (page 25) quoted this article it left out entirely the reference to other Watch Tower associates being "fellow servants" along with "that servant" who is the "one channel." This allowed the magazine to give the false impression that the "faithful slave" was understood as applying to the *Watch Tower* magazine rather than to Charles Taze Russell. This type of editing can only be termed journalistic dishonesty.

10 The *Watch Tower*; December 1, 1916, page 356. See also *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 53-57, for photocopied documentation of the Society's insistence during the 1920s that Russell was the "faithful and wise servant."

Of those classed as "opponents" to his being "that servant" used as God's "channel," in the October 1, 1909 *Watch Tower* referred to, Russell represents them as saying:

> Our opponents are often bitter and sarcastic after taking the antagonistic position. They retort that the expression "that servant" should be understood to mean all the members of the church of Christ, and that the expression, "his fellow-servants," is meaningless, because it refers to the same class. They declare that although it is true that they got their first enlightenment respecting the value of Christ's death as a "ransom for all," and their first knowledge of the "times of restitution of all things," and their first appreciation of the "high calling." and their first knowledge of the parousia and the harvest time of this age, and their first knowledge of the fulfilment of prophecies in connection with this harvest time, and their first understanding of the nature of man and the work of redemption, atonement and regeneration from this Society's publications, nevertheless they are of the opinion that all of these things were previously published by others, and they are seeking to find the books. They claim further that to apply this Scripture to us would signify that we are infallible.
>
> ---
>
> But, retort the opponents, while we do not deny the service rendered, yet if we grant the application of Matthew 24:45 to be correct, then we are forced to apply the other part, the context, which says, "Verily I say unto you, he shall make him ruler over all his goods." That would mean that the "fellow-servants" and the "household of faith" in general might not expect to receive their spiritual meat from any other quarter than "that servant." We are opposed to this thought and hence opposed to the entire matter.

Note that those he calls "opponents" *then took the same position that the Watch Tower Society today upholds*, namely, that "the faithful and wise servant" should be understood to mean "all the members of the church of Christ," not one man. To view Russell as "that servant" and call all others his "fellow servants" was therefore "meaningless," since they were all part of "that servant." They saw a clear danger in looking to any human source as the sole channel through which to receive truth and understanding. In Russell's eyes, to question in such way the special relationship with the Lord which his holding the position of "that servant" and of being the chosen "channel" implied, was being "antagonistic" and making "bitter and sarcastic" expressions. All of this has a very familiar ring.

Twenty-three years earlier, in 1886, in his book *The Divine Plan of the Ages* (page 23), Russell had said that the development of a

heirarchical organization has its roots in "an undue respect for the teachings of fallible men."

> Then by degrees there came into existence a special class called "the clergy," who regarded themselves, and were regarded by others, as the proper guides to faith and practice, aside from the Word of God. Thus in time the great system of Papacy was developed by an undue respect for the teachings of fallible men and a neglect of the Word of the infallible God.
>
> Serious indeed have been the evil results brought about by this neglect of truth. As all know, both the church and the civilized world were almost wholly enslaved by that system, and led to worship the traditions and creeds of men.

Now, however, when some were expressing less than total support for his writings as constituting "the one special channel" chosen by the Lord, he endeavored to attribute great, even vital, importance to those writings. He thus represents his "friends" as saying of his publications:

> They point out that they themselves and their forefathers for generations had Bible classes and Bible studies all to no purpose until the Lord, in due time, sent them the "Bible Keys," through the Society. They point out that to ignore this leading of the Lord and to exclude from their study of the Bible the teacher sent of the Lord would be to dishonor the Lord who sent the same and to reject His helping hand; and that the only result that could be expected of such a course would be a gradual loss of light—a proportionate loss of the holy Spirit, the Spirit of the truth, and eventually to reach the "outer darkness" of the world and the nominal-church, from which they were rescued by the truth. They declare that this would correspond to a sow returning to her wallowing in the mire and the dog to his vomit, as the Apostle declares. They declare that to take such a course, to them would mean a lack of appreciation of having been called out of darkness into this marvelous light, a lack of appreciation of the light of "the day star" promised by the Lord as a precursory of the glorious sunrise of the new dispensation.—2 Pet. 1:19-21.
>
> They point out further that the "Dawn-Scripture Study" Volumes are practically the Bible itself in an arranged, systematic form; and that it is this very systematization of the Bible which brought them to their present enlightenment and joy in the holy Spirit. They declare that wranglings and speculations and guesses respecting things not revealed in God's Book are what is often styled "Bible study," and that they are afraid of these and desire to keep close to the Lord and to the message which they believe that he has sent to them, and that. therefore, they prefer to study the Bible in the light and under the leading of the "Berean Studies" and the "Studies in the Scriptures," and to look for further light in the same direction and without expecting special revelations to their own brains or from a variety of directions.[11]

11 Three months later, in the December 15, *Watch Tower*, page 371, he warned the magazine's readers that a test was on and that the "wily adversary" was attempting to "prejudice them against the very instrumentalities God provided to keep the 'feet' [the final body members] of Christ in this evil day." This was being done through certain class leaders who were attempting to supplant the Watch Tower publications with the Bible and Russell states that in so doing they were endeavoring "to come between the people of God and the divinely provided light upon God's Word."

Note that the "friends" are presented as saying that all the Bible study they and their forefathers had engaged in had been *completely ineffectual* until the Watch Tower publications came along. Evidently God's holy Spirit was either inactive or simply ineffective in providing them and their forefathers the help they needed. Whatever prayers they had made to God for understanding during those "generations" apparently simply went unanswered, because His time had not yet arrived to produce His "channel."[12] Note as well that after this statement of the crucial role of that Society, Russell presents his "friends" as saying that "to ignore this leading of the Lord and to exclude from their study of the Bible *the teacher* sent of the Lord *would be to dishonor the Lord who sent the same and to reject His helping hand*," all this leading to "gradual loss of light," loss of holy Spirit and ultimate entry into "outer darkness." All this from the pen of the man who had earlier said that it was "the undue respect for the teachings of fallible men" that led to a hierarchy and to enslavement.

In the latter part of the article Russell abandons the "friends versus opponents" literary device and expresses himself directly. Commendably, he urges an avoidance of quarreling or name-calling. He urges the importance of "meekness" and "humility." At the same time, in the article he himself portrays those who believe it unscriptural to view him and his magazine as God's unique channel as "disloyal 'fellow servants,'" "crafty," having a "contentious spirit," that they seem "inoculated with madness, Satanic hydrophobia." Any who do not continue in affiliation with his Watch Tower Society are described as 'sifted-out ones.' While saying that one should not be unkind to persons who have gone "blind," he goes on to speak of these dissenters as persons "who in this hour of temptation are being smitten down by the arrows of the adversary because, from the Lord's standpoint, they are not deemed worthy of the necessary succor." Clearly, in his mind, to qualify as among those showing 'meekness, humility and teachableness' required a humble recognition that Christ had chosen just one special "servant," "one special channel," and a meek receptiveness to the writings of that "servant" as unquestionably superior to all other sources of knowledge on God's Word. In reading the article I could not but wonder at the incredibly warped reasoning that can develop in the human mind no matter how religiously oriented it may be. How can an individual write such extreme praise of himself and

12 Compare John 14:26; 1 John 2:27; 5:20.

his writings, attach such enormous, crucial, vital importance to those writings, argue for his being a special, one-of-a-kind, never-before-seen, never-to-be-repeated agent of God and then impute a lack of meekness and humility and teachableness to those who doubt this? I view it as a form of mental illness, an infection from the germs of self-centeredness that breed wherever an atmosphere of personal importance and power develops. None of us have a natural immunity to it. Our protection comes from a clear and constant recognition of the headship reserved solely to Christ, from remembering that, if we have a personal relationship with God, so does every other person who shares a common faith, and from a deep respect for the fact that before God we all stand as equals.

Compare all the foregoing history and expressions with the statements of Ignatius, Cyprian and other leaders of the early centuries in their push for greater adherence and loyalty to the bishop as the God-selected religious teacher, their equation of any lack of submission or receptiveness with a 'dishonoring of the Lord,' and their warnings of dire consequences to any who questioned the privileged position that being so chosen by the Lord implied. In the words of Lightfoot, the bishop then became "the indispensable channel of divine grace." In the case at hand, we have a man presenting himself as the "one special channel" of God for receiving understanding of God's message and direction. The parallel is evident.

The centuries-old pattern of elevating human importance and, by implication, human authority, was surfacing once again. It soon received fresh and powerful impetus.

The Centralizing Process Intensifies

With Russell's death in 1916, a period of uncertainty ensued. By then the wholesale collapse of his intricately developed time-prophecies system (which had its starting point in 1874 and its ending date in 1914) threw matters into disarray and produced a fallout of much questioning.[13]

Russell's successor, Joseph F. Rutherford, had to deal with this. Any devotion Rutherford felt for the high principles that early issues of the *Watch Tower* had enunciated was now put to the test.

The book *Crisis of Conscience* has already documented the means he chose to employ to bring order to the ranks. Those means included his strident, dogmatic defense of the Watch Tower

13 See *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 204 to 233.

Society's traditional teachings, the intimidating insinuations leveled at any who questioned the absolute rightness of the time prophecies of the past and the new ones being developed, the profusion of such expressions as "indisputable," "of proven certainty," "correct beyond the possibility of doubt," "of divine origin and divinely corroborated," "too sublime to be the result of chance or of human invention," statements applied to chronology calculations that are now completely discarded.[14] As the large number of persons ceasing their affiliation during the first half of the 1920s demonstrates, the success of these methods was limited.

Rutherford added to the turbulence of the period due to his clear concern and determination that, as president of the Watch Tower Society, he should exercise the same degree of authority that Russell had held. The difference was that he was not the Society's founder or the overwhelming majority shareholder, as Russell had been. A power struggle resulted within the board of directors. Through dismissal of four board members not in accord with his desire for full control and, later, the dissolution of the editorial board Russell had provided for, Rutherford broke any resistance and thereafter exercised monarchical authority in the Society headquarters.

While this now gave him complete control over the Society and what it published, his authority did not extend beyond that domain. During Charles Taze Russell's presidency the corporation, Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society, was viewed simply as an instrument for the publishing of the message. It and its officers exercised no administrative authority over the congregations or "ecclesias" that developed. Any control that existed was primarily and essentially suasive. Now, however, persuasive approaches were deemed too weak to deal with the circumstances existing. Coercive methods steadily replaced them. Duplicating what took place in the early centuries, *centralization of authority and control* was resorted to as the means to maintain, actually to *impose*, unity.

In 1919, as the book *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* relates, just two years after Judge Rutherford had assumed the presidency, congregations were asked to "register as a service organization with the Society," with the understanding that then the Brooklyn headquarters would appoint a brother in the congregation to serve as the Society's appointee, called a "director." The book mentioned adds (on page 95):

14 See *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 223 through 233.

> This meant that for the first time authority was being taken away from the democratically controlled congregations under their "elective elders," and direction was to reside now, specifically, under the Society's international supervision. True, it was limited, but the visible theocratic organization got started with this arrangement.

The thin edge of the wedge had been inserted.

Very early on, therefore, Rutherford began to move away from the *Watch Tower*'s position of previous years. He began to work toward the very thing that Russell had decried as the product of "fleshly thinking": the development of a 'visible, aggressive, tight-knit, centralized organization.' The year after the first step (just described) was taken, another followed. The Society's own history relates:

> The tightening up of preaching responsibility began in 1920 when everyone in the congregation who participated in the witness work was required to turn in a weekly report.[15]

In this way, an implied duty of submission to the control of the Brooklyn headquarters was now implanted in the minds of all associated. One normally reports to a superior, or at least to someone toward whom one has some obligation.

In the first century the good news was proclaimed throughout the Roman world and was accepted by thousands of persons. The apostle Paul, who carried the good news to many nations nowhere attributed the spread of the message to human organization. To the contrary he acknowledged that it is 'neither he that plants nor he that waters, but God who by his power gives the growth.'[16] In somewhat similar vein, the Watch Tower's first president, Russell, had said that it was fleshly thinking to believe that a visible human organization was essential "to accomplish anything."

By contrast, the focus on organization during Rutherford's presidency became almost an obsession. In 1922, the *December 15 Watch Tower,* page 389 said:

> The efficiency with which the witness must be given <u>of necessity</u> depends largely upon <u>the organized efforts</u> made in the field.

This is echoed six decades later in the June 1, 1986, *Watchtower* (page 25) which says of the work done by Jehovah's Witnesses in 1985:

> This work could never be done <u>without an organization</u>. . . . They could do it <u>only because they were efficiently organized</u> into

15 *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, page 96.
16 1 Corinthians 3:5-7.

> nearly 50,000 congregations, all under the visible direction of their one Governing Body.[underlining mine]

The power of God's holy Spirit seems largely forgotten, replaced by the 'efficient organizing' (and the men directing it), without which success would be impossible. Evidently first-century Christians failed to realize the 'impossibility' of bearing witness throughout the Roman Empire without such organizational arrangements. In none of the accounts contained in Scripture is organizational efficiency ever credited with any role in the spread of the message and its acceptance by thousands. As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7 of this book, the remarkable factor in all the account is the amazing degree of spontaneity evident, the informality manifest, the absence of any type of highly programmed, intensively supervised activity.

Theocracy—Rule by God from the Top Down

During the decade that followed, Rutherford continued to strengthen the position of the Society (and, obviously, of himself as the president thereof). In 1931 he personally selected the name "Jehovah's Witnesses" for the organization. In 1932 he eliminated the bodies of elders (then elected by the congregations), stating that the arrangement was "not according to the principles of the great Theocrat, who rules his sanctuary from the top down." Now the congregations nominated a Service Director to be "confirmed by the Society's executive or manager."[17]

Then in 1938 all congregations worldwide were invited to adopt an agreement authorizing the Brooklyn headquarters to appoint any and all persons serving in responsible positions in the congregations. With this, everything was now acclaimed to be fully "Theocratic," "God-ruled." The centralization of authority had been accomplished. God now ruled, "from the top down"—and, on the way down, everything came through the Brooklyn headquarters. What early religious leaders of the past had taken over two centuries to achieve, the Watch Tower organization accomplished in a mere half century.

As in the early centuries of Christianity, a measure of disturbed conditions and a resultant stress on the need for "unity" and "order" provided the justification for such intense centralizing of authority and the subordination of the individual to it. Repeatedly, all were urged to submit to "Theocratic order," which in actuality meant to accept what came from the headquarters as if it came from God. The

17 *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Devine Purpose*, page 127.

decision by the Watch Tower president to eliminate elder bodies and his establishment of "Theocratic rule" were later portrayed as the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy of the 'cleansing of the sanctuary' after 2,300 days, and the new interpretations and teachings the organization developed were said to be the "flashes of lightning" proceeding from God's temple as described in the book of Revelation.[18] Called "the sanctuary class," they clearly presented themselves as if 'seated in God's temple.'

In view of all these factors, it seems evident that the "man of lawlessness" characteristics were surfacing in this relatively new religious organization as they had in other religions, large and small.

An Essential for Life

Early *Watch Tower* issues had acknowledged that the supporters of that magazine were not the only Christians on earth, that they were not penned up in some human organization with its defined boundaries. Human salvation was not dependent on organizational membership but on faith. By contrast, the latter years of Rutherford's presidency saw ever greater stress placed on the visible "organization" and its importance. The whole world was divided into two camps under two major, comprehensive organizations. The book *Enemies*, published in 1937 (the first book I personally studied) states (page 72):

> There are two great organizations in existence, to wit: the organization of the Almighty God, which is wholly righteous, pure and true, and the organization of the Devil, the mimic god, which is unholy, wicked and entirely false. The people of earth are subjected to one or the other of these two organizations.

It was not so much the view itself but the *application* of that view that exercised such a coercive effect on all congregation members. The attitude fostered was that the only way to be under *God's* direction was to be submissive to the instructions coming through the *visible organization* (with headquarters in Brooklyn), for everything outside that organization's confines was of the organization of Satan. So Jehovah's Witnesses felt and so I felt.

Those *outside* the organization, whatever their evidence of faith and Christian hope and life, were condemned as *resistant to God himself* if they did not accept the views advanced by the organization regarding Christ's "invisible presence" in 1914 and other teachings

18 Daniel 8:14; Revelation 4:5; 11:19; see also *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, page 127; "*Your Will Be Done on Earth*," pages 210-217; *Light I* (1930), pages 104, 227-229.

and claims tied to that date. By failing to accept such views, they were decried as *insubordinate to God*."[19] In a series of seven Witness conventions from 1922 to 1928 resolutions passed were said to be the divine fulfillment of the 'seven trumpets' of Revelation chapters eight and nine. These contained repeated condemnations of the "League of Nations," "big business," religious leaders, and similar things. But what might be called the "bottom line" in all of them was the issue of acceptance of the claims tied to the date of 1914.[20]

Statements in the 1933 booklet *Dividing the People* (pages 61-63) typify the position taken toward the non-Witness population of earth:

> In the secret place of the Most High there have been revealed to those who love Jehovah certain great truths which they are commanded to proclaim to the nations. (Matthew 10:27) Among such truths revealed are these: That Jehovah is the true God; that Christ Jesus is his anointed King, who is earth's rightful ruler; that in 1914 he took his office, and his first work was to cast Satan out of heaven; that in 1918 he began to gather the faithful into a compact company and make known to them that Satan has builded a mighty organization in the earth consisting of religion, politics and commerce; that within a short time the battle of Armageddon will be fought; that, knowing there is but a short time for him, Satan now brings greater burdens upon the people; that in order to vindicate His holy name and save the people the battle of Armageddon will result in the complete destruction of Satan's organization, including all the nations of the earth; that the people must now be notified, and that such notice or testimony will be given amidst great opposition, but will be given just the same; and that such notice is not a threat, but is a solemn warning, and those who hear it may receive it or reject it; take it or leave it.
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> Those who take Satan's side and oppose Jehovah's truth shall die; those who serve Jehovah shall live forever and obey and honor his holy name.

19 *Light I*, pages 122, 123.

20 *Light I*, pages 108, 111, 118, 122-125, 139, 140; 218, 219; see also *Then Is Finished the Mystery of God* (1969), pages 209-247.

Acceptance of the *teachings*, (among the most distinctive, those relating to 1914) would logically mean acceptance of the *organization* that speaks for God, the Brooklyn-based Watch Tower organization, and submission to its "Theocratic order." To appreciate the reality of this, the Witness world view must be kept in mind, namely, that there were only two camps and that all people were divided between two organizations: Satan's and God's. There was only one way to escape destruction: separate from Satan's organization (containing 99.99% of earth's population), and align oneself with God's organization (composed then of about 100,000 Witnesses or about 0.006% of the people). That was the only choice, "take it or leave it," and the warning was: if you leave it, you face death.

Although written during the year following Rutherford's death, an article titled "Righteous Requirements," published in the July 1, 1943 *Watchtower*, pages 204-206, illustrates the attitude of total submission to the organization that had been inculcated during his presidency. It shows, too, how an organization can plainly and unabashedly ask people to equate what it says with what God himself has said. Consider these quotations:

> Every organization requires specific instructions for all those who serve in it. In the past the Lord issued his "organization instructions" to his servants through his central agency or channel. Each one joyfully accepted his part therein and faithfully carried it out.
>
> Now, the apostle says, Jehovah speaks to us through his Son. (Heb. 1:1, 2) The Son has returned as King; he has come to his temple. He has appointed his "faithful and wise servant", who is his visible mouthpiece, and says to those who are privileged to represent him upon the earth, "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations" (Matthew 24:14);
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> These expressions of God's will by his King and through his established agency constitute his law or rule of action for the "faithful and wise servant" and for their good-will companions today who will dwell upon the earth for ever in the New World. The Lord breaks down our organization instructions further and makes them more practicable by further instructing us through his "faithful and wise servant". He says, 'Let us assign the field, the world, to special pioneers, regular pioneers and companies of Jehovah's witnesses in an orderly way, sufficient for everyone to thoroughly witness therein, and let us place upon each one the responsibility of caring for the New World interests in these respective assignments.' He says the requirements for special pioneers shall be 175 hours and 50 back-calls per month, which should develop into a reasonable number of studies; and for regular pioneers 150 hours and as many back-calls and studies as

can be properly developed during that time. And for company publishers he says, 'Let us make a quota of 60 hours and 12 back-calls and at least one study a week for each publisher.' These directions come to us from the Lord through his established agency directing what is required of us; and, for those who really love the Lord and are guided by his counsel, that is a reasonable service requirement. This expression of the Lord's will should be the end of all controversy. It is for your good that these requirements are made; for thereby you are enabled to prove your integrity and magnify the Lord's name.

These directions from the Lord come to us as individuals and as collective units called "companies". Almost everyone who is consecrated to the Lord recognizes that a company requires organization in order to function properly, but not all of these same brethren appreciate the fact that they as individuals require just as complete an organization to carry out their individual responsibilities as the company does. To illustrate: All realize that every company should have a definite assignment of territory in which to witness, but not all appreciate that each individual in that company should have his or her own personal assignment of territory in which to witness. It is just as foolish for a publisher to conclude that he can serve the Lord properly without a personal assignment as it would be for a company to decide that it could function acceptably to the Lord without a territory assignment. A company is required to have an assignment and to systematically work in it from house to house, make back-calls, conduct book studies, and generally aid the people of good-will. They are to carry on all the forms of magazine work in that assignment. They logically hold their own city and such adjacent territory as they can properly handle. It would be the height of foolishness for them to leave their own city and go to a city twenty miles away held by someone else and try to systematically witness in it. Every intelligent person will admit that that would be not only foolishness but rank unfaithfulness to the Lord. The same principle applies to the publisher who refuses to accept the responsibility for a personal assignment of territory and have that assignment as close as possible to his home. The farther away from his home that assignment is, the less time he will have to devote to it and the more difficult it will be to give proper attention to the interest in the territory. Consequently, it is a measure of unfaithfulness to the Lord to thus waste time and energy that belongs to him.

The time has come when each one must bear his own burden fully before the Lord. With the provisions that the Lord has now made in supplying us with new books, question booklets which contain complete instructions for properly carrying on a study, etc., there is absolutely no excuse for anyone, man or woman, to claim to be unable to accept an individual territory assignment and assume full responsibility for it. Those who really love the Lord and are fighters for the New World will not try to excuse themselves on that or any other ground, but will hear the Word of the Lord when he says, Let *us* do thus and so, and always keep in mind the *us* includes the Lord, who will be with you in every undertaking. —Matthew 18:20.

The Lord through his "faithful and wise servant" now states to us, *"Let us cover our territory four times in six months."* That becomes our organization instructions and has the same binding force on us that his statement to the Logos had when he said, "Let us make man in our image." It is our duty to accept this additional instruction and obey it. But someone will say, "The conditions are different. In the case of the Logos, he could accomplish what Jehovah commanded him to do; but when it comes to covering our territory four times in six months, that is out of all reason. We have never covered it more than once or, at the most, twice in six months. It just can't be done." We have all heard that argument before. And if it were true it would look bad indeed, and would imply that the Lord was asking us to do something that is impossible for us to accomplish. The children of Israel walked around Jericho *seven* times the *last* day.

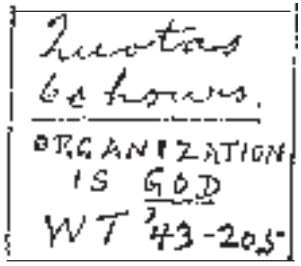
The territory now being covered one to two times in six months could very easily be covered four to six times in the same period if everyone took his Kingdom responsibilities seriously. This is *not* theory, but actual facts based on figures gleaned from a number of companies during the past six months.

To do this may mean taking time and effort that is now being devoted to "old world" interests and transferring them to New World interests, which are of God and shall abide for ever. The words of the apostle Peter are to the point in this respect: "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"

(2 Peter 3:11) Before real progress will be made in increasing our activity we must each one recognize these calls to action as coming from the Lord and applying to us personally, and respond to them wholeheartedly.

The New World Government is 29 years old. Consequently it should be kept before the minds of the people at all times by calling at their homes and telling them about it, by making back-calls and conducting studies with them, by working business territory and calling on them in their offices. They should be witnessed to on the streets with our magazines, publishers presenting the message of the New World. No matter where they go, the people should have always before them the evidence that the New World Government has begun to function.

I was only 21 years old when that material appeared. Even so, reviewing this material now, I ask myself how it is possible that I and the vast majority of Jehovah's Witnesses could possibly read such blatantly arrogant assertions and not feel repelled or at least be caused to think seriously about the attitude developed in us. At least one person did. The bound volume I presently have of the 1943 issues of the *Watchtower* once belonged Percy Harding, who had begun to associate with the organization *back in 1910* and continued that association for *seventy years* up until 1981(see his account in Chapter 11). When looking up the article above quoted, I found a small slip of paper he had inserted in the article. It is here reproduced:



The whole spirit of this 1943 *Watchtower* article reflects the identical viewpoint expressed centuries ago in the Clementine Homilies, quoted earlier, in the statement that "whoever disobeys your orders disobeys Christ, and whoever disobeys Christ offends God."

That is why the earlier-mentioned *Watchtower* article (referred to in Chapter 2), written in 1946, four years after Judge Rutherford's death, and entitled *"Let God Prove to Be True,"* was

so refreshing. It represented a radical change from the almost army-like, regimented thinking and action I had been used to during the years of Rutherford's presidency.

Since the statements made in that 1946 *Watchtower* article and those made by Watch Tower officials in the Scotland case in 1954 are at positive odds with one another, which represents the true position of the organization today?

Regrettably, the evidence shows that the refreshingly moderate position taken by the 1946 *Watchtower* as regards the Bible and the right and responsibility of each individual to read it and through such study to come to a personal conviction regarding its teachings, without dictation from some organization acting as a "teaching power" or "teaching office," soon began to be qualified. Not only qualified, but eventually rejected, argued against in completely opposite terms. Why?

I believe that after Judge Rutherford's death there was an initial desire—on the part of both Nathan Knorr and Fred Franz—to move away from the strident dogmatism found in Rutherford's writings. No particular internal crisis situation existed when the new presidency of Nathan Knorr began, no major questioning or threat of defection such as Rutherford faced and which even the Society's publications indicate he met with hard-handed, sharp-tongued response. Governing Body member Lyman Swingle, in discussing one day the change effected by the reorganization of the Governing Body in 1975-76, said to me, "If you think *that* made big changes, you should have been here after Rutherford died and Knorr took over." Knorr's presidency marked a notable improvement over the virtual tyranny of Rutherford's control.

Whatever the initial feelings of Knorr and Franz, however, as time passed, the age-old pattern began to assert itself once more. The trend toward strong emphasis on centralized organizational authority became more and more pronounced. The existing authority structure was, in fact, the one that had been built up during Rutherford's presidency. It was a legacy from him. For that legacy to stay intact and in force it had to be argued for, the centralized authority had to be stressed, or else it might lose its control over the individual members, their thinking, their decision-forming abilities, their use of their time, their conscience.

It may be noted that the 1954 Scotland trial, the "Walsh case," was over the issue of whether Douglas Walsh, the presiding overseer of a congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, qualified for classification as an ordained minister under British selective service

regulations. To achieve the goal of obtaining such a classification, the Watch Tower officials did just the opposite of what had been claimed in *Watch Tower* magazines of earlier times. Those magazines had claimed that Jehovah's Witnesses were very *different* from the established religions of Christendom which had their *authority structures* and their official *creeds*. Now the Watch Tower officials tried to demonstrate that Jehovah's Witnesses as a religion were essentially very *similar*, that they in effect had a creed to which all must adhere, and that therefore whatever classification the clergy of the established churches qualified for, the presiding overseers of Jehovah's Witness qualified for as well. That appears to be a major reason why the Watch Tower spokesmen, Franz, Covington and Suiter, were so positive, even adamant, that the obligation rested on all members of the organization to accept and conform to ALL teachings of the organization, on pain of expulsion for disobedience—even though these persons might rightly believe that some of the teachings were contrary to Scripture. For the legal benefits sought, it seems that they needed—or believed that they needed—to establish that type of creedal authority over members in order for Walsh to be classified as an "ordained" minister of a *recognized, bona fide, established religion*.[21]

As may be recalled, when asked, with regard to the Watch Tower Society's authoritative statements of doctrine, "Is their acceptance a matter of choice, or is it obligatory on all those who wish to be and remain members of the Society?" the answer given by Fred Franz was, "It is obligatory." When asked, with regard to the erroneous teaching about 1874, whether "it became the bounden duty of the Witnesses to accept this miscalculation," the vice president responded, "Yes." When the statement was put to him, "A Witness has no alternative, has he, to accept as authoritative and to be obeyed instructions issued in the "Watchtower" or the "Informant" [now *Our Kingdom Ministry*] or "Awake"?" his reply was, "He must accept these." When asked whether, separate from the information contained in the corporation's publications, a man would be able to interpret the Scriptures truly, he answered, "No."

When Hayden Covington was asked whether unity was sought even though "based upon an enforced acceptance of false prophecy?" he said, "That is conceded to be true." When asked whether one's refusal to accept such would lead to disfellowshiping and thereby place such a one in a position "worthy of death," he replied, "I will answer yes, unhesitatingly."

21 The court decision did accord the Witness religion recognition as an "established" religion, but it ruled against granting Walsh recognition as an "ordained minister."

Likewise, Grant Suiter, when asked whether a person can have a right understanding of the Scriptures apart from the publications of Jehovah's Witnesses, he answered, "No." With regard to the erroneous teachings about 1874 and 1925, when asked if "acceptance and absolute acceptance [of these teachings] as Truth was imposed upon all Jehovah's Witnesses at the time," he said, "That is right."

In reality, much of this misrepresented the facts. Neither in Russell's time nor even during Rutherford's time (during whose presidencies the specific false predictions mentioned had been taught), had there been the practice of disfellowshiping persons who conscientiously objected to certain teachings. In Russell's time there were subtle criticisms or insinuations of a lack of faith for those expressing doubt or disagreement; in Rutherford's time such ones might come in for demotion of position, even verbal castigation, but actual *excommunication* used as a coercive instrument to enforce uniformity was rare. The three Society representatives evidently felt it justifiable, however, to say what they did in order to attain the end they were seeking. They colored the past to make it fit the organizational position that was by now in effect, where acceptance of the organization's teachings had become compulsory if one would avoid ejection.[22]

One might wish to think that their expressions were couched in such absolute, unbending, terms only due to the circumstances, under the temporary pressure of the trial questioning, and that therefore they did not represent the true viewpoint and practice of the organization, particularly the stand so eloquently presented in 1946. It would be good to take such a charitable view, if only the evidence allowed for it. It does not, however. Consider what subsequent issues of the magazine had to say.

22 A similar use of tactical maneuvering is seen in a more recent court case, taking place in Bonham, Texas, in 1986. Elders who were trustees of the Kingdom Hall there were arbitrarily replaced by the Watch Tower Society and a court case resulted as to who had rightful control over the hall. The law recognized only two types of ecclesiastical control, hierarchical or congregational. The Watch Tower Society's publications had adamantly stated that its direction was "not hierarchical." (See, for example, the book *Life Everlasting in Freedom of the Sons of God* (1966), page 169; *Qualified to Be Ministers* (1955), pages 289, 290.) However, in order to establish its control over this Bonham Kingdom Hall, the Society's attorneys were authorized to present its control as "hierarchical" rather than "congregational." Don Adams, then a vice president of the Society's New York corporation, submitted an affidavit to this effect, stating in point 6: "To implement their decisions, the Governing Body uses a hierarchical organization together with corporate entities." (See the Appendix.) He then outlines evidence of the hierarchical nature of the arrangement prevailing, with the Brooklyn headquarters at the top of the authority structure, followed by branch committees, zone overseers, district overseers, circuit overseers, bodies of elders, and ministerial servants. In this case the declaration of a hierarchical nature was contrary to the organization's *published* claims. It was not, however, contrary to the *facts*, for the hierarchical nature of the structure is apparent.

An Age-Old Pattern Prevails to the Present

In the 1940's Jehovah's Witnesses had been drawn tightly together by persecution—mob violence in some areas, the flag salute issue, totalitarian suppression and persecution in Nazi Germany and other regimented countries—and by the overall tension of World War II. By the 1950's this had all passed. Witnesses who, as teenagers and pre-teenagers, had been told by Judge Rutherford at the 1941 St. Louis convention that 'soon the princes of Bible times would be with them,' and to hold off in marrying until that time, were now well into their mid-twenties.[23] The postwar era of growing prosperity and increased tolerance was progressing. The dire conditions that had stimulated excited speculation about Armageddon's nearness had receded into the background. As with many other religious organizations that explain prophecies as applying to certain modern dates and time periods, the whole history of the Watch Tower organization showed its reliance on *unfavorable* world conditions as confirmation of its claims. The bad news of the world serves as a means of stimulating the expectations of the membership, filling them with a sense of urgency. The peace period following World War II did not supply this in any way comparable to the dramatic circumstances during the war years.

Amid an atmosphere of somewhat waning enthusiasm among Jehovah's Witnesses, the *Watchtower* now began to deal with a tendency on the part of some to question the rightness of its claims and teachings. Back in 1946, the *Watchtower* had flatly rejected the idea of a "Mother Church" empowered by God to teach her "children." The idea of any visible organization charged with being a "magisterium" or teaching authority to interpret the Bible for its adherents was also rejected. Now, just six years later, the following statements appeared in the February 1, 1952, *Watchtower* (pages 79, 80):

> 11 We must show our understanding in these matters, appreciating our relationship to the visible theocratic organization, remembering the fate of those like Korah and Achan and Saul and Uzziah and others who forgot the theocratic order. Are we assigned as individuals to bring forth the food for the spiritual table? No? Then let us not try to take over the slave's duties. We should eat and digest and assimilate what is set before us, without shy-

23 See *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 13, 14, 196, 197.

ing away from parts of the food because it may not suit the fancy of our mental taste. The truths we are to publish are the ones provided through the discreet-slave organization, not some personal opinions contrary to what the slave has provided as timely food. Jehovah and Christ direct and correct the slave as needed, not we as individuals. If we do not see a point at first we should keep trying to grasp it, rather than opposing and rejecting it and presumptuously taking the position that we are more likely to be right than the discreet slave. We should meekly go along with the Lord's theocratic organization and wait for further clarification, rather than balk at the first mention of a thought unpalatable to us and proceed to quibble and mouth our criticisms and opinions as though they were worth more than the slave's provision of spiritual food. Theocratic ones will appreciate the Lord's visible organization and not be so foolish as to pit against Jehovah's channel their own human reasoning and sentiment and personal feelings.

12 Now some may ask, Should we accept as from the Lord and true the food provided through the discreet slave, or should we withhold acceptance until we have proved it for ourselves? If we have gained our present understanding of the Bible by feeding at the table set by the slave, if we have been thereby freed from false doctrines and built up in the clean and undefiled worship of God and given a new world hope, we should have some confidence in the slave's provisions. After being nourished to our present spiritual strength and maturity, do we suddenly become smarter than our former provider and forsake the enlightening guidance of the organization that mothered us? "Forsake not the law of thy mother." (Prov. 6:20-23) And if the heavenly Father would not give a stone or serpent or scorpion to a child who asked for bread or fish or an egg from him, are

> we to take the spiritual food he provides through the slave into our hands as if we were going to be bruised by a stone or bitten by a serpent or stung by a scorpion? (Matt. 7:7-11; Luke 11:9-13, *NW*) Are we to be doubtful and suspicious about each new provision? "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." (Jas. 1:6, 7, *NW*) Even the Beroeans first received Paul's preaching "with the greatest readiness of mind", and then went to "carefully examining the Scriptures daily as to whether these things were so". (Acts 17:11, *NW*) This was the first real contact the Beroeans had with Paul's preaching, yet they received it readily and then studied the Scriptural support for themselves. How much more readily we can receive the slave's provisions with confidence, since, unlike the Beroeans, we have much past experience with the precious provisions from the slave. After receiving these food supplies we prove their Scripturalness for ourselves to make the message our own, in a spirit of meekness and trustfulness and not combativeness.

For *Watchtower* readers, the organization is in effect portrayed as above and beyond correction by any source other than God and Christ. For anyone to attempt to point out errors would indicate that they thought themselves "smarter" than the "mother" organization, hence lacking in humility. Incredible as it may seem when considering the long history of speculation, failed predictions, erroneous date setting, and numerous shiftings in interpretations of Scriptures, the article tells its readers that *they can receive the "mother" organization's teachings "much more readily" than the Beroeans could receive what the apostle Paul said*—because "we have much past experience with the precious provisions from the slave [the organization]"! In reality, the greater their past experience with the organization's publications, the greater their reason for exercising extreme caution, as the organization's error-ridden history plainly shows.[24]

24 *God's Outlaw*, a book by Brian Edwards about Bible translator William Tyndale, on page 7 lists one of Martin Luther's three major contentions as being that "the papacy was a human governing body, capable of error and itself to be tested by Scripture."

The process of emphasizing human authority and the intensifying of human control by means of centralized authority which Rutherford had so ably developed over three decades, was carried along with even greater ability by his successors. Their language progressed beyond the blunt, even openly dictatorial, expressions typical of his presidency. It employed far more sophisticated, complex argumentation and smoother, more appealing speech. Yet it achieved the same degree of intellectual intimidation and sought to impose the same sort of guilt complex on any who did not promptly line up with whatever teaching or policy or program proceeded from the central headquarters in Brooklyn.

The ultimate effect reminds me of what historian Paul Johnson writes in summing up the view of the church held by Cyprian in the third century. In *A History of Christianity*, pages 59, 60 he states:

> [Cyprian] reasoned as follows. The Church was a divine institution; the Bride of Christ; Mother Church, the mediatrix of all salvation. It was one, undivided and catholic [universal]. Only in association with her could Catholics have life. Outside her holy fellowship there was nothing but error and darkness. The sacraments, episcopal ordination, the confession of faith, even the Bible itself, lost their meaning if used outside the true Church. The Church was also a human, visible community, found only in organized form. The individual could not be saved by direct contact with God. The carefully graded hierarchy, without which the organized Church could not exist, was established by Christ and the apostles. . . . the only unambiguous instruction [the Scriptures] contained being to remain faithful to the Church and obey its rules. With Cyprian, then, the freedom preached by Paul and based on the power of Christian truth was removed from the ordinary members of the Church; it was retained only by the bishops [overseers], through whom the Holy Spirit still worked, who were collectively delegated to represent the totality of church members.

Re-read this, replacing the word "church" with "organization." Then ask if this does not describe accurately the view inculcated among Jehovah's Witnesses through constant repetition as shown by the following evidence.

Honoring the Mother Organization

In the May 1, 1957, issue of the *Watchtower* (page 274) the statement is made that the "real mother of Christians" is not an earthly organization but a heavenly one, "God's invisible universal organization." However, the spiritual 'mother' is said to have a

"visible channel of communication" for all congregation members and that channel is the earthly organization. Which, in plain words, means that when "mother" talks it is through the "visible theocratic organization" and so if one wishes to listen to the "heavenly mother" he or she must do so by listening to the visible organization of the Watch Tower Society. In effect, then, whatever is said of the 'invisible, spiritual, heavenly mother' becomes applicable to her supposed earthly channel, without whose direction members cannot understand the Bible. After quoting Proverbs 6:20, 23, the article states:

> **3 Consider that for a moment. Two things are mentioned: the commandment of the father and the teaching or law of the mother. Then the proverb explains that the commandment of the father is a burning lamp but that there is light also from the teaching or law of the mother. The world is full of Bibles, which Book contains the commandments of God. Why, then, do the people not know which way to go? Because they do not also have the teaching or law of the mother, which is light. Jehovah God has provided his holy written Word for all mankind and it contains all the information that is needed for men in taking a course leading to life. But God has not arranged for that Word to speak independently or to shine forth life-giving truths by itself. His Word says: "Light is sown for the righteous." (Ps. 97:11) It is through his organization that God provides this light that the proverb says is the teaching or law of the mother. If we are to walk in the light of truth we must recognize not only Jehovah God as our Father but his organization as our mother.**
>
> **4 Some who call themselves Christians and who claim God as their Father boast that they walk with God alone, that he directs their steps personally. Such persons not only forsake the teaching or law of the mother, but they literally throw God's woman out into the streets. The light of God's truth is not for them. In the nation**

> of Israel Jehovah made obedience to parents mandatory. "Honor your father and your mother" was the fifth commandment of the Ten. (Ex. 20:2-17; Deut. 5:16, *NW*) The reward for obedience was long life; for disobedience, death. "In case a man should happen to have a son who is stubborn and rebellious, he not listening to the voice of his father or the voice of his mother, and they have corrected him but he will not listen to them, then . . . all the men of his city must stone him with stones and he must die." (Deut. 21:18-21, *NW*) Such honor and obedience was required not only as due the immediate parents in the flesh but also as rightfully belonging to the older men of influence in Israel. Failure to render such proper respect to Elisha, the prophet of Jehovah, brought upon a gang of juvenile delinquents the just sentence of speedy execution. (2 Ki. 2:24) Today, also, God requires and exacts from his children obedience, honor and respect. These must be rendered not only to the living God himself, but to his wifely organization as well.

This material is filled with assertions. It presents a picture that is completely foreign to what the Christian Scriptures reveal as regards the real relationship of believers within the Christian congregation. Those Scriptures show that men can help others to grow in knowledge and understanding; but they nowhere present men, or some collective body of men, as *essential* to such knowledge and understanding. This would be a negation of the teaching of Jesus Christ that *he and he alone* occupies the position of Teacher in that essential way.[25] The *Watchtower*'s position, rather than being representative of Scripture, reflects the third-century language of Cyprian, who wrote of the "mother Church" in this way:

> . . . from her womb we are born, by her milk we are nourished, by her spirit we are animated. . . . He can no longer have God for his Father, who has not the Church for his mother.[26]

25 Matthew 23:8, *NW*; *TEV*.
26 "The Treatises of Cyprian," Treatise I, paragraphs 5, 6.

Again, replace the word "Church" with the word "organization" and the language, along with the whole thrust of the claim, becomes identical to that found in the *Watchtower* magazine just quoted. In the minds of members, the published distinction between the 'heavenly mother' and her earthly 'daughter' becomes irrelevant and becomes a distinction without a difference, for mother's voice is heard only through the earthly channel. Although it may be said that this is not so, that the 'heavenly mother's' voice is also heard through the Scriptures, members are plainly told that they can only understand those Scriptures through the earthly organization. By virtue of such claims, the visible organization becomes a kind of co-parent with God, the earthly agency by which the Father conveys all his instructions to his children among mankind.

One can appreciate the diminishing effect this view can have on the role of Jesus Christ and of holy Spirit in the minds of those accepting these claims, and this is the most serious aspect of the matter. When "mother" speaks with Father's backing, where does the Son come in and how necessary is his guidance? References to Christ Jesus and to holy Spirit in this *Watchtower* exposition just quoted are notable only by their complete absence. Today, despite any claims to the contrary, in the minds and speech of most Witnesses the common tendency is to think and speak in terms of "Jehovah and his organization" with Christ Jesus given only subordinate mention. Holy Spirit seldom merits even that mention. Any who think this is not the case should take the time to listen to themselves and others in their conversation.

"Biblical truth" and "organizational teachings" become merged as essentially equivalent, one and the same, in the minds of most Witnesses, and it is the continued drumming of organizational superiority and authority into their thoughts that produces this mental mix-up. Generally there is an effort to dress up the authoritarian claims with words that somewhat mask this reality. Occasionally, however, the Watch Tower writers, by some simple expression more typical of Rutherford's time, unconsciously express the actual outlook developed. In 1967, for example, a revised edition of the book *Qualified to Be Ministers* (page 156) made this statement:

> [5] The first essential for study is the right condition of mind and heart, appreciating that Jehovah grants understanding only to the meek, and not to the stiff-necked. If we have love for Jehovah and for the organization of his people we shall not be suspicious, but shall, as the Bible says, 'believe all things,' all the things that *The Watchtower* brings out, inasmuch as it has been faithful in giving us a knowledge of God's purposes and guiding us in the way of peace, safety and truth from its inception to this present day.

In earlier centuries religious interpretations and rulings came to the people as from "the Church." In actuality it came from the men who ran the Church at the particular time, whether popes or other church theologians. But by the emphasis on "the Church"—more so than on the particular men involved—submission to such dogma as authoritative was made more palatable. The same is true with the use of the term "organization." During Rutherford's time the fact that all his writings prominently carried his name to some extent impeded the effect that can now be obtained with literature and articles whose authorship is, by policy, kept *anonymous*. Now the human author is covered by the mantle of the organization and readers simply view what they read as "from the organization." In reality that means, "from the men who currently occupy the positions of authority in the organization." Witnesses are trained not to think that way, to feel guilty if they do. And that is precisely the way people in the second and third centuries were trained to think so as to achieve a near total submission to "the Church," the controlling organizational authority.

Just as the term "Church" or *ekklesia* then came to have a double meaning—referring at times to the community of believers and at others to the religious authority exercising control over the believers—so the word "organization" is used in two ways by the Watch Tower organization.[28] It can mean all who are Witnesses worldwide, the Witness community. Or it can refer to those who form the authority structure that directs and controls that community. It is generally not difficult to tell which way the term applies. If there is exhortation to *trust, put faith in, be loyal to, listen to, show submission to* "the organization" it always applies in the second sense. This thought prevails in the minds of Witnesses. In the expression "Jehovah directs his people through his organization," if "organization" were used in the first sense it would mean "Jehovah directs his people through his people," for "organization" would refer to the whole community of Witnesses. Such expressions occur regularly in the Watch Tower publications and create no problem—simply because the minds of Witnesses almost automatically relate the term "organization" to the authority structure based in Brooklyn. It thus takes on the same sense that the word "Church" acquired in the post-apostolic period.

As the individual then was made to feel dependent on "the Church" for understanding the Scriptures, so the individual Witness is made to feel incapable of understanding the Scriptures apart from "the organization." They are told that "To it alone God's Sa-

27 See chapter 3, pages 61, 62.

cred Word, the Bible, is not a sealed book." It is "the only organization on earth that understands the 'deep things of God'!"[28] The Witnesses' dependency and individual inability was clearly argued in the October 1, 1967, Watchtower, which declared the Bible to be the organization's book (pages 587, 590):

> Christian Greek Scriptures were added to complete the Bible, each book was written directly to the Christian congregation or to a member of the Christian congregation in its behalf. Thus the Bible is an organizational book and belongs to the Christian congregation as an organization, not to individuals, regardless of how sincerely they may believe that they can interpret the Bible. For this reason the Bible cannot be properly understood without Jehovah's visible organization in mind.
>
> ---
>
> After cleansing those belonging to this house who were alive on earth, Jehovah poured out his spirit upon them and assigned them the responsibility of serving as his sole visible channel, through whom alone spiritual instruction was to come. Those who recognize Jehovah's visible theocratic organization, therefore, must recognize and accept this appointment of the "faithful and discreet slave" and be submissive to it.[29]

Compare these statements with the earlier-quoted article of 1946 and its categorical denial of hierarchical claims to spiritual 'ownership' of the Bible. There could not be a more complete reversal of position, actually an outright adoption of the very hierarchical claims then condemned. The claims of the "Mother Church" of Catholicism were now equalled by those of the "mother organization" of the Watch Tower.

28 The *Watchtower,* page 402.

29 The *Watchtower* of September 1, 1954 (on page 529), had made essentially the same claim, saying: "In view of its unbreakable connection with the Christian theocratic organization, the Bible is organization minded and it cannot be fully understood without our having the theocratic organization in mind. . . . All the sheep in God's flock must be organization-minded, like the Bible."

As the author quoted earlier expressed it, the only unambiguous instruction church leader Cyprian presented was "to remain faithful to the Church and obey its rules."[30] This was the rule of all rules if one wanted to be safe and be sure of staying under God's approval. Cyprian and others of the early "Church Fathers" warned that rejection of the bishop's (presiding overseer's) instruction was tantamount to *rejection of Christ and God*. Ignatius, for example, in his "Epistle to the Trallians," chapter VII, had said:

> For what is the bishop but one who beyond all others possesses all power and authority, so far as it is possible for a man to possess it, who according to his ability has been made an imitator of the Christ of God. . . . He, therefore, that will not yield obedience to such, must needs be one utterly without God, an impious man, who despises Christ, and depreciates his appointments.

Though softening the effect by the use of questions, the February 15, 1976, *Watchtower* (page 124) presents the same distorted viewpoint regarding any not responding to the direction proceeding from the organization:

> 14 But we do not want to accept the undeserved kindness of God and miss the purpose or reason for being brought into God's clean organization. (2 Cor. 6:1) We must not be indifferent. It is not wise to take things for granted. We cannot afford to remain stationary. We must take seriously what his Word says and what his organization reveals to us. As new information comes out we must take it to heart and sincerely endeavor to apply it in our lives. We are in God's clean organization to bring honor and praise to Him. If we fail to do this, then we are missing the purpose for becoming clean and "holy." Really, could we then expect the blessings and support of God?
>
> 15 God's way of ruling is by love. (1 John 4:16) He wants us to do things because they are right. Sometime in the future a test may be imposed upon us to comply with certain information that God brings

30 *A History of Christianity*, page 60.

to our attention. It may hit something that we love very dearly. What will we do? Will we hesitate in applying counsel, perhaps pondering in our mind as to what we want to do about it? If that would be the case, wouldn't we really be asking ourselves the question, 'Do we really want the rulership of God?' Would not a failure to respond to direction from God through his organization really indicate a rejection of divine rulership?

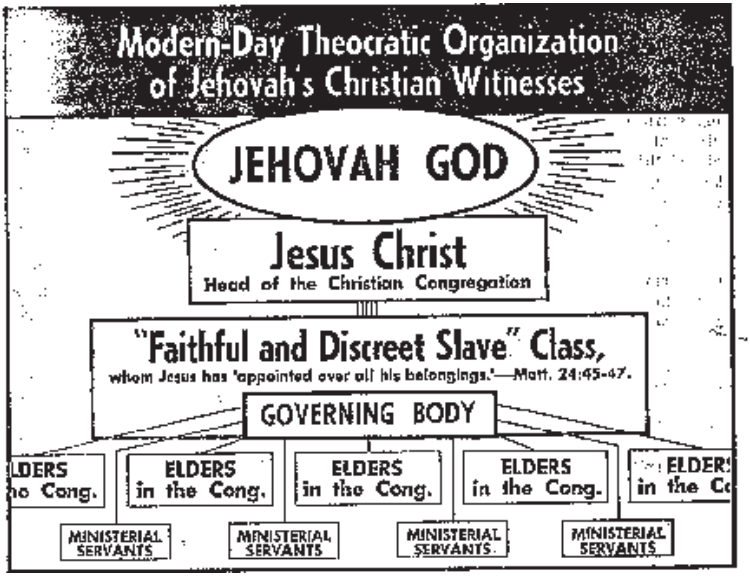
Failure to submit to the earthly organization's direction is equated with "rejection of divine rulership." That men can make such comparisons or analogies is actually frightening. Even more frightening is that they do it without any sense of impropriety, rather as if it is a meritorious thing to say. By their claim to be the sole source or channel of communication from the command center, those exercising the organizational authority to all intents and purposes *become* the command center. Again, the serious danger implicit in any such transferal of unhesitating soldier-like submission to fallible human religious leaders seems never to occur to the writer of the *Watchtower*'s deductive reasoning.

The Authority of a Supreme Religious Council

In the early centuries, control of a single congregation, or perhaps of the area surrounding a prominent city, was attained by the formation of the office of, and promotion of the authority by, a bishop or sole presiding overseer. It was by means of religious *councils* that a central ruling body eventually came into power *internationally*.

Up until the 1970s, *Watchtower* references to a "governing body" were infrequent. From that time forward, however, strong emphasis was placed upon the position and authority of this group of men. In the early centuries Church leaders began telling Christians to look to the bodies of elders as if they were "the body of apostles." This same outlook was inculcated in them toward the councils that were later organized. Although it claims to reject the concept of "apostolic succession" (as practiced in the Catholic Church, wherein the bishops are viewed as "successors of the apostles"), the Watch Tower organization encourages a similar outlook, presenting the Governing Body as the modern-day equivalent of the council of apostles and elders in Jerusalem.

Toward those in positions of authority in ranks subordinate to its own, the Governing Body views itself as standing in essentially the same relationship as the apostle Paul stood to Timothy or Titus or to the elders and other members of congregations. We have already seen (on page 99) the remarkable claim that Witnesses today can, on the basis of experience, more readily receive with confidence what comes from the "faithful and discreet slave" and its Governing Body than the Beroeans could receive what they heard from the apostle Paul. In actuality there is an appropriation, even an arrogation, of authority not merely equal to, but in many respects superior to, that of the apostles. The "chain of command" and communication from God downward is illustrated in this way in the December 15, 1971, *Watchtower* (page 749):



In reality, the actual authority structure follows the arrangement of supreme and subordinate ranks here set out:

As eventually took place in the early centuries, a *religious council* has taken on a permanent character, one of constant control, internationally. The May 15, 1986, *Watchtower* contained an article asking the question, "Are Religious Councils Approved by God?" On page 24, it defined an "ecclesiastical council" as:

> . . . a representative church assembly with deliberative and often legislative authority in questions of faith, morals, and church discipline.

The writer, who proceeds to argue that God does not approve of such councils, evidently did not realize that the quoted definition perfectly describes what the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses is. Its sessions are for the very purpose of deliberating on and, frequently, legislating on "questions of faith, morals and church discipline." That is what we did virtually every week during the nine years of my membership on that Body.[31]

In discussing emperor Constantine's role in early councils, the same *Watchtower* article, on page 15, quotes historian H. G. Wells as saying:

> The idea of stamping out all controversy and division, stamping out all thought, by imposing one dogmatic creed upon all believers, is the idea of the single-handed man who feels that to work at all he must be free from opposition and criticism. . . . From him [Constantine] the Church acquired the disposition to be authoritative and unquestioned, to develop a centralized organization . . . .
>
> Charges of heresy proved to be a ruthless scheme to eliminate opponents who dared to defy Christendom's church councils. Any who expressed differing opinions or even attempted to present Scriptural proof refuting the dogmas and canons (church laws) of the councils were branded as heretics.

Again the *Watchtower* writer evidently did not realize that the description of Constantine's disposition was a very apt description of the disposition of the Watch Tower organization's second president, J. F. Rutherford, during whose regime a determined centralization of authority also took place. In the Society-sponsored book *Faith on the March* by long-time headquarters representative, A. H. MacMillan, the author says of Rutherford (page 72):

31 Interestingly, the *Watchtower* article (on page 26) quotes a historical work as stating that, aside from the one Jerusalem council described in Acts chapter fifteen, "all councils are products of the post-apostolic church. They do not belong to the period of the foundation of the church." Again, the writer evidently failed to recognize that this presents the Jerusalem council as a one-time occasion, not as part of an ongoing, permanent arrangement for regular sessions of some type of "governing body."

> He would never tolerate anything that would be contrary to what he clearly understood the Bible to teach. He was so strict about that, he would permit nothing that would seem to show a compromise when it came to an issue of truth.

The *authority* which enabled him to "tolerate" or "not tolerate," to "permit" or "not permit," disagreement by others with what he personally understood as truth, was something he insisted upon as his presidential prerogative. He effectually took away the control exercised by a board of directors, eliminated completely an editorial board, assumed full authority over everything published, and forced the departure of those staff members unwilling to support these and similar actions. This was proclaimed as "a weeding out, a time of judgment, a cleansing of the entire organization set apart to become the household of God's servants."[32] As shown in *Crisis of Conscience*, the supreme authority of the presidency that he fought for, and succeeded in gaining, was removed from that position in 1976 and passed on to a body of men, a Governing Body.[33] But that is essentially all that happened—a *transferal* of power and authority from an individual to a collective religious council. Though expressions of hope were initially made that the change would promote a more humble, brotherly spirit, the fact is that the "disposition to be authoritative and unquestioned, to develop a centralized organization" which historian Wells spoke of, remained. As stated, the blunt, sometimes coarse, language employed by Rutherford was replaced by more scholarly, more intellectually appealing presentations. Yet that same *disposition* that resents, deprecates and seeks to silence any difference of viewpoint clearly controls the actions and decisions and outlook of the religious council called the Governing Body. The evidence thus far presented and that which follows is but a fraction of that available to demonstrate the validity of this statement.

Equating an Organization with God and Christ

Among all the claims and arguments of church leaders in the second and third centuries who pushed for greater human authority and centralized control, there is virtually no statement that is not paralleled in the publications of the Watch Tower organization in recent times. When study and research finally brought this home to me, I found it increasingly difficult to harmonize the organizational self-approval, self-praise, and self-identification as God's channel,

32 *Faith on the March*, page 81.
33 See *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 56-107.

with its simultaneous calls for humility and meekness on the part of everyone else. Most of all I felt deeply disturbed at its interposing of itself between the individual and God—on the one hand encouraging people to seek a "personal relationship" with God, while at the same time superimposing on this their claims to be the indispensable means for receiving divine guidance and blessing. God would simply not grant any person these favors apart from them, they insisted. I could not make this square with Jesus' words at John, chapter fourteen, verse 6:

> I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

Or with the words of Peter at Acts, chapter four, verse 12:

> There is no salvation in anyone else, for there is not another name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.

or with those of Paul, who, in writing of the spiritual building done by Christians, says, as recorded at First Corinthians, chapter three, verse 11:

> For no man can lay any other foundation than what is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

There seemed to be a definite infringement upon Jesus' divine role. If no one comes to the Father except through him, then—according to the published statements already presented—it was being claimed that no one comes to Christ except through the Watch Tower organization, which thus inserts itself between the individual and God's Son. Logically, this makes the human organization an essential for salvation. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that the claims of the "Mother Church" that *no one can find salvation outside the Church* are clearly matched by the "mother organization," as seen in the following quotations from the October 1, 1967, *Watchtower* (pages 591, 592) and the November 15, 1981, *Watchtower* (page 21):

> 8 Make haste to identify the visible theocratic organization of God that represents his king, Jesus Christ. It is essential for life. Doing so, be complete in accepting its every aspect. We cannot claim to love God, yet deny his Word and channel of communication.
>
> ---
>
> Therefore, in submitting to Jehovah's visible theocratic organization, we must be in full and complete agree-

ment with every feature of its apostolic procedure and requirements.

"We can expect a similar expansion of our preaching activity now, at this climax of the ages. No doubt, before the "great tribulation" is finished, we will see the greatest witness to God's name and kingdom in the history of this world. And while now the witness yet includes the invitation to come to Jehovah's organization for salvation, the time no doubt will come when the message takes on a harder tone, like a "great war cry."

In a talk to the Brooklyn headquarters staff on January 23, 1981, Governing Body member Karl Klein voiced his personal support for this position—that there is no way to gain everlasting life except by and through the Watch Tower organization, saying:

> No doubt about it, God's Word serves as a light on our pathway as regards our conduct and beliefs. But Jehovah God has also provided a "faithful and discreet slave" organization to help us understand and apply the Bible. And unless we get in touch with that "faithful and discreet slave" we will never get on the road to life, no matter how much Bible reading we do! . . .
>
> So, let us never forget the point that Peter made when Jesus asked his apostles if they wanted to leave also. There simply is no other place to go for spiritual food and genuine Christian association than with those who are loyal to the "faithful and discreet slave" organization."[34]

This was echoed in a subsequent article in the February 15, 1981, *Watchtower* (page 19):

OUR VIEW OF THE "SLAVE"

We can benefit from this consideration. If we have once established what instrument God is using as his "slave" to dispense spiritual food to his people, surely Jehovah is not pleased if we receive that food as though it might contain something harmful. We should have confidence in the channel God is using. At the Brooklyn headquarters from which the Bible publications of Jehovah's Witnesses emanate there are more mature Christian elders,

34 From a word-for-word transcript of his talk on that date.

> both of the "remnant" and of the "other sheep," than anywhere else upon earth.
>
> True, the brothers preparing these publications are not infallible. Their writings are not inspired as are those of Paul and the other Bible writers. (2 Tim. 3:16) And so, at times, it has been necessary, as understanding became clearer, to correct views. (Prov. 4:18) However, this has resulted in a continual refining of the body of Bible-based truth to which Jehovah's Witnesses subscribe. Over the years, as adjustments have been made to that body of truth, it has become ever more wonderful and applicable to our lives in these "last days." Bible commentators of Christendom are not inspired either. Despite their claims to great knowledge, they have failed to highlight even basic Bible truths —such as the coming Paradise earth, the importance of God's name, and the condition of the dead.
>
> Rather, the record that the "faithful and discreet slave" organization has made for the past more than 100 years forces us to the conclusion that Peter expressed when Jesus asked if his apostles also wanted to leave him, namely, "Whom shall we go away to?" (John 6:66-69) No question about it. We all need help to understand the Bible, and we cannot find the Scriptural guidance we need outside the "faithful and discreet slave" organization.

Among Witnesses disciplined to accept submissively whatever the organization gives them, it seldom registers on their minds, or gives rise to any real concern, that this final statement quoted effectively replaces Jesus Christ with the "'faithful and discreet slave' organization." After quoting Peter's question, "Whom shall we go away to?" the *Watchtower* writer says, "No question about it. We all need help to understand the Bible, and we cannot find the Scriptural guidance we need outside the 'faithful and discreet slave' organization."[35]

35 This article was perhaps also written by Karl Klein, as the use of such phrases as "No question about it" and "No doubt about it," are almost a trademark of his writing and speech.

With regard to Jesus' question, Governing Body member Karl Klein spoke of there being no other "place" to go for spiritual direction other than to the Watch Tower organization. By contrast, the apostle Peter himself gave a quite different answer, speaking not of a "place" but of a *person*, saying:

> *You* [Jesus Christ] have sayings of everlasting life.

Only among a thoroughly indoctrinated audience would the *Watchtower* writer's replacing Christ with the organization be possible without producing the slightest murmur of dissent. Both the talk by Governing Body member Karl Klein and this article made it appear that Christ Jesus has so firmly committed himself to a contractual relationship with the earthly Society that he cannot act apart from them, cannot speak to individuals except through them, cannot enlighten or guide individuals without first using the mediation of the Watch Tower organization. Most Witnesses must honestly admit (if only to themselves) that they frequently use Peter's question, "Whom shall we go away to," to show that "we must stick with the organization," which is not at all what Peter himself said.

Thus the usurpation of the role of God's Son as the one and only "way" to truth and life has become a fact, as their own minds testify. His claim to being "the way and the truth and the life" is not exclusively his. It must be shared with the "mother" organization, the Watch Tower organization, without which no one can come to understand Bible truth or find the way to life. The things said by Christ about his role in God's purpose, and those said by Peter of God's Son are appropriated and attributed to an earthly, human organization, crediting it with the role of vicegerent of Christ. Its authority is presented as meriting a submission approximating, if not equivalent to, that accorded to Christ. There simply is no life without it, the organization. To deny that arrogant claim is to invite expulsion on the astounding charge of "apostasy"![36]

36 It may be noted that the *Time* magazine article of February 22, 1982, quotes me as saying, "There is no life outside the organization." I made that statement to Ann Constable, the *Time* reporter, in explaining to her the effect disfellowshiping has on Witnesses, the attitude many have when facing disfellowshipment, that they feel "there is no life outside the organization." Since, when the article appeared, the context gave the appearance that this expressed my own sentiment, I immediately wrote a letter to the editors, stating, "When I said this, I was describing not my own feelings but the viewpoint prevalent among most Witnesses and implicit in the organization's teachings. My understanding from Scripture is that God's Son is, exclusively, `the way and the truth and the life.'" The contents of this letter were published in the "Letters to the Editor" section of a subsequent issue of *Time*. See the Appendix.

All this means nothing more nor less than that this earthly, human organization has become, to all intents and purposes, a mediator. Just as imperfect, sinful man cannot go to God apart from the mediation of his Son, whose ransom sacrifice provides the means for reconciliation with God, so, it is taught, man cannot come into an approved relationship with Christ and, through him, with God, cannot even rightly understand the truths about Christ that are the foundation for faith, without going through the earthly, human organization, the Watch Tower organization and its Governing Body. It functions, therefore, as *a mediatorial society*. This is why all who fail to come into association with it must die in the coming "great tribulation," according to the published teaching.

I found all this at total variance with the clear statement at First Timothy, chapter two, verses 5 and 6:

> For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus, who gave himself a corresponding ransom for all.

Very unlike the Watch Tower organization in its elevation of itself to a mediatorial role in the salvation of others, the apostle Paul forcefully rejected such a claim for himself, pointedly asking those to whom he wrote, "Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?" (1 Corinthians 1:13, *NIV*). Only Christ has died for us as a ransom sacrifice, not the men composing any human organization or governing body; therefore only He has received the right to act as mediator between us and God.

Baptism—Validated by Whom?

Historical writer Johnson observed that in the post-apostolic period it became the case that, along with the Bible, "the sacraments . . . lost their meaning if used outside the church." A primary "sacrament" was that of baptism.

Initially among Bible Students in Russell's day, no issue was made as to one's having been baptized while affiliated with one of the various Christian denominations. The only question was whether one understood the meaning of baptism and whether this was by immersion.[37] That remained the case for over seven decades. As late as the July 1, 1955, *Watchtower* (page 412) it was stated that rebaptism was necessary only if the "previous baptism was therefore not in symbol of a dedication" or if it was not by immersion.

37 I recall my uncle, Fred Franz, when already the Watch Tower's vice president, remarking to me that if his baptism in the Presbyterian Church had been by immersion (rather than sprinkling) he would have considered it still valid.

One year later, in the July 1, 1956, *Watchtower* the position was reversed. It said (page 406):

> **BAPTIZED A SECOND TIME**
>
> **14 Often the question is asked whether one baptized previously in a ceremony performed by some other religious group should again be baptized when coming to an accurate knowledge of the truth and making a dedication to Jehovah. Because of what has been already said, now there is compelling reason for also saying, Yes, one must be baptized again. Obviously, by any of such religious systems one was never in reality baptized "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit," because had he been so baptized he would have appreciated the authority and office of such true Higher Powers. And if previously dedicated to Jehovah, the individual would have separated himself from such God-dishonoring Babylonish systems even before letting them baptize him. So the act of being baptized is not the important thing, but, rather, that which the act symbolizes is the element of importance.**

This was, however, followed up by a "Question from Readers" about six months later that qualified the terms for rejecting as invalid any baptism "outside the organization"—even though by immersion. Now it was said that the cutoff date for possible validity of such baptism was the year 1918. Why? Because "in A.D. 1918 . . . Jehovah God accompanied by his Messenger of the Covenant came to the temple and cast off Christendom." If the person had been *immersed in symbol of dedication to God and Christ before that date*, and had also *left his or her previous denomination and affiliated with the Watch Tower organization before 1918*, it was left up to the person's conscience to decide if rebaptism was in order or not.

For all others the firm position was:

> **Hence now when the call to come out of Babylon is being clearly sounded out, if anyone has heard of this call and yet remains in a religious part of antitypical Babylon and gets immersed in such a religious part, his immersion would not count. His decision could not**

> **have been a dedication to do God's will, because, to quote paragraph 14, "the individual would have separated himself from such God-dishonoring Babylonish systems even before letting them baptize him.**[38]

He *must* be rebaptized. The question was positively settled because the words of "paragraph 14" of the *Watchtower* settled it. Scriptural evidence was apparently not required. In the post-apostolic period, baptism "lost its meaning if performed outside the Church," that is, outside the domain of religious authority. The same position was now taken by the Watch Tower organization of any baptism not performed within its domain.

Back in 1955, the *Watchtower* had said:

> A Christian . . . cannot be baptized in the name of the one actually doing the immersing or in the name of any man, nor in the name of any organization, but in the name of the Father, the Son and the holy spirit. This shows, among other things, that Christianity is not a denominational affair . . . .[39]

In talks preceding a baptismal ceremony, it was common for the speaker to remind the candidates that "you are not symbolizing your dedication to a work, or dedication to an organization, but your dedication to a *person*—Jehovah God."[40] Somewhat similarly, the October 1, 1966, *Watchtower* (page 603) stated:

> We do not dedicate ourselves to a religion, nor to a man, nor to an organization. No, we dedicate ourselves to the Supreme Sovereign of the Universe, our Creator, Jehovah God himself. This makes dedication a very personal relationship between us and Jehovah . . . .

In 1942, the two questions put to candidates were these:

> **(1) Do you believe in Jehovah God the Father, that "salvation belongeth unto Jehovah", and that Christ Jesus is his Son in whose blood your sins are washed away and by whom salvation comes to you from God?**
>
> **(2) Have you therefore confessed your sins to God and asked for cleansing by Christ Jesus, and therefore turned away from sin and the world, and consecrated yourself without reservation to God to do his will?**[41]

38 The *Watchtower*, December 15, 1956, page 763.
39 The *Watchtower*, July 1, 1955, page 411.
40 As I recall, this point was even included in outlines supplied by the Watch Tower for those giving baptismal talks.
41 The *Watchtower*, October 1, 1942, page 302.

These questions were essentially close in content to the expressions of Peter and others of the apostolic period when calling on persons to "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus the Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."[42] In 1956 and (with very minor variation) for many years thereafter the questions presented at Witness baptismal services were these:

> " (1) Have you recognized yourself before Jehovah God as a sinner who needs salvation, and have you acknowledged to him that this salvation proceeds from him the Father through his Son Jesus Christ?
>
> " (2) On the basis of this faith in God and in his provision for salvation, have you dedicated yourself unreservedly to God to do his will henceforth as he reveals it to you through Jesus Christ and through the Bible under the enlightenment of the holy spirit? [43]

With absolutely no Biblical discussion for making any major change in these basic questions which individuals must answer affirmatively to qualify for baptism, the June 1, 1985, *Watchtower* now listed these as the questions to which all candidates were to respond:

> **On the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, have you repented of your sins and dedicated yourself to Jehovah to do his will?**
>
> The second is:
>
> **Do you understand that your dedication and baptism identify you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with God's spirit-directed organization?**
>
> Having answered *yes* to these questions, candidates are in a right heart condition to undergo Christian baptism.

The April 15, 1987, *Watchtower* (page 12) gives this unusual explanation of the reason for this change saying: "Recently the two questions addressed to baptismal candidates <u>were simplified</u> so that candidates could answer with full comprehension of what is involved in coming into intimate relationship with God <u>and his earthly organization</u>." This supposed "simplification" did only one thing: it required of each candidate a declaration of submission and obligation to an earthly organization. If we read the Christian

42 Acts 2:38, *NEB*; 1 Peter 3:21, 22.

43 The *Watchtower*, July 1, 1956, page 407.

Scriptures we see that the crucial factor validating baptism was in every case that those taking that step "believe on the Lord Jesus" as God's Messiah and their Redeemer, able to save them.[44] They were "baptized into Christ Jesus."[45] This was "simple" enough that persons could, and did, comprehend it in one day, in a few hours. There is nothing apostolic about the Watch Tower organization's "loaded" wording of the matter, for the apostles never brought into the picture the concept of an "earthly organization," which, as has been clearly demonstrated, refers to nothing more or less than a human authority structure.

Christ had told his disciples to baptize persons "in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit."[46] The Watch Tower's second baptismal question effectively replaces God's holy Spirit with "the spirit-directed organization." While the Spirit receives token mention, once again we are faced with the situation where the organization appropriates a divinely assigned role for itself. It clearly conveys the idea that God's holy Spirit will not operate on the person being baptized *except in connection with the Watch Tower organization*. It does not emphasize the way in which the *individual being baptized* will henceforth be guided by God's Spirit but instead stresses the "spirit-directed *organization*." It seems incredible that the *Watchtower* can then refer to this as a "simplification" of previous questions. It speaks of an "intimate relationship with God" but makes this meaningless for it shoves the earthly organization into the matter, making it, not an intimate relationship *with God*, but an intimate relationship "with God *and* his earthly organization." Whereas Jesus spoke only of "the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit," the organization presumes to place itself in this sacred picture as an indispensable party to it. This is tantamount to a servant telling people that they can have contacts and relationship with a master *only provided the servant is always there too*, acting as intermediary, spokesman, manager, decision-renderer. Such an attitude could only be classified as arrogant.

For 19 centuries persons had been baptized without their baptism being prefaced by any such wording. For over one hundred years persons among Watch Tower associates had been baptized without such wording. Did they not properly understand what their baptism meant? Why, after over 100 years, was this "simplification" now needed in order for persons to have "full comprehension" of what their baptism signified?

44 Acts 16:31-33; compare also Acts 2:36; 8:5, 12, 27-38; 9:1-20; 10:34-48; 11:16, 17; 18:8; 19:3-5.
45 Romans 6:3; Galatians 3:27.
46 Matthew 28:19, *NEB*.

I believe that the 1985 alteration represents a concern to have persons acknowledge formal ties to the organization, a commitment to it as a religious authority over them and therefore an implied acceptance of its government over them and its right to direct the formation of ecclesiastical courts to "try" those viewed as in violation of its rules and policies.

In recent years, a fair number of persons have simply withdrawn from association with the Witness organization without making any formal notification of disassociation. Even though continuing to live moral lives, if they subsequently do or say something that manifests that they are not in full accord with each and all of the organization's teachings and policies, they are frequently approached by elders, questioned and often summoned to a "judicial hearing." Some have stated that they saw no reason to attend such hearing, that they did not view themselves as subject to the organization's ecclesiastical authority. Some have even had an attorney send a letter to the elder body stating their position and requesting that they not be subjected to further investigation, interrogation or summons. In virtually all such cases, the Watch Tower Society's legal department has mailed to the person (or to the attorney, if one was involved) a bulky package in the form of a legal brief, presenting much evidence of the organization's success in the courts in related cases and citing numerous legal cases in support of their right to act as a religious "government" and "ecclesiastical court" toward persons baptized by the Witnesses. In essence, the material states that the person or persons involved have only two alternatives, either attend the "judicial hearing" or formally disassociate themselves.[47] As an example, the material cites one U. S. Supreme Court decision which, among other things, says:

> The right to organize voluntary religious associations to assist in the expression and dissemination of any religious doctrine, and to create tribunals for the decision of controverted questions of faith within the association, and for the ecclesiastical government of all individual members, congregations, and officers within the general association, is unquestioned. All who unite themselves to such a body do so with an implied consent to this government, and are bound to submit to it.

The "right" referred to is the legal right of an "ecclesiastical government" to act in the manner described. Thus, the brief sent out by the Watch Tower Society's attorney stresses the "legal" factor when summing up matters in this way:

47 The reasons why many do not wish to make such a formal disassociation are considered in Chapters 10, 11 and 17 of this book.

C. Relation between the Congregation and Its Members. It is axiomatic that the essence of the relationship of a religious society with its members is held by the courts to be the agreement of the parties and, generally, a profession of faith, adherence to the doctrine of the religious society and a submission to its government. (76 C.J.S. 755, section 11) A party having voluntarily assented to becoming a member of a congregation thereby subjects himself or herself to the existing rules and procedures of said congregation and cannot deny their existence. All who unite themselves to such a voluntary religious organization do so with the implied consent to this government and are bound to submit to it. State ex rel. Morrow v. Hill, 364 N.E.2d 1156 (Ohio 1977), Watson v. Jones, 80 U.S. 679, 729 (1872), 13 Wallace 679.

Since your clients have not disassociated themselves from the congregation, then under the law they have given implied consent to its government, subjecting themselves to the existing rules and procedures, and are bound legally to submit to it. The theocratic government of the congregation to which your clients have legally submitted includes specifically the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, its legal agency, known as the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., and all their duly appointed representatives including the elders of the congregation with which they are associated. The rules and procedures which your clients have subjected themselves to include those of the judicial committee arrangement set forth in detail above.

In objecting to being investigated and "tried" by elders, some who have withdrawn have pointed out that in the pre-1985 period when they were baptized they 'dedicated themselves to God and not to an organization.' The altered questions *now* used plainly tell the baptismal candidate that he is committing himself to a "dedication and baptism" that 'identifies him as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with God's spirit-directed organization.' This assures that he has indeed forfeited any "legal" right to say he is not subject to the organization's government and ecclesiastical courts. At least for the organization's legal department, this does, indeed, "simplify" matters. I find it a sad evidence of the concern for authority that any organization would utilize the sacred, very personal step of baptism as occasion for asserting its authority in the baptized one's life.

Even as religious leaders of the early centuries turned the clock back and reverted to Old Testament views of a special priestly class, thereby demoting all Christians not of that class to an inferior position with God, so the Watch Tower organization regularly endeavors to place its members in a similar Old Testament context. At the annual "district assemblies" the programs often feature dramas in which attitudes toward such men as law covenant mediator Moses, high priest Aaron, King Saul, King David or other men of special, even unique and lofty, position are depicted. Unblushingly, the organization then proceeds to parallel itself and its position with such ones and forcefully stresses that it deserves to be shown the same deference and submission. It is as if the coming of Christ had not taken place or wrought

the radical change that it did, removing all such distinctions and placing all on the same level before their heavenly Father and in the same relationship to their Head and Master, Christ.

An article in the magazine *Christianity Today* of October 24, 1980, points out the concern of the Reformation leaders at seeing that the institutional church had become an end instead of a means, adding:

> What they opposed was a church that had arrogated to itself an authority for its teachings that placed them beyond the correction of the Scriptures. The church had ceased to be a means of inculcating the knowledge of God and had become an end under whose teachings everyone was subject.

It took less than a hundred years for the organization built around the Watch Tower to complete the whole pattern of the past. In that comparatively short space of time it went from a reasonably modest, unassuming, tolerant stance to one of dogmatism, to a despotic imposition on the minds of its adherents of what it describes as "the great body of truths" produced by it, its organizationally developed traditional teachings, its official creed. From a condition of relative freedom as brothers and common members of a universal priesthood under Christ, it turned to appropriating for its leaders, not only apostolic authority, but a centralized control and power over others that the apostles themselves never presumed to exercise toward their brothers, since they viewed themselves 'not as masters over others' faith, but as fellows workers for their joy.'[48]

It was largely during the 1920s and 1930s that the mold was cast for this concept and attitude in the Witness organization. Sadly, it has been allowed to remain and continues intact to this day. The existing leadership has never been able to break free from the rigidity of that concept. Does this imply that the men in positions of authority within the organization are all "power-hungry," dictatorial persons? I certainly do not view them that way, and on the basis of personal experience I am satisfied that many are not. In the early centuries, there were men who, like the "wolves" of whom Paul warned, sought to have people follow them as leaders, and exalted human authority to attain this. However, there were doubtless other professed Christian men who, faced with frustrating situations, seeing people being swayed by what they viewed as erroneous teachings, went along with the buildup of human authority under the false idea that the end justified the means, and

48 2 Corinthians 1:24.

thus they gave in to the lure of authority. The same influences operate in our times.

The authoritarian atmosphere that has developed in the Witness administration does not necessarily reflect the heart attitude of all Governing Body members. There is really no effective way for a man to "campaign" to become part of that select group. Invitations to membership result from secret sessions of the Body and generally come as a surprise to the invited one. In my experience, a few of the men were actually of a quite mild nature, not inclined toward dominating others. They rarely even spoke in the discussions, seemed somewhat in awe of certain members and almost always voted as these voted. Others, becoming members at the Body's invitation, thereafter seem, in a sense, to have been seduced—that is, having had a taste of being a part of the authority structure, they find it hard to relinquish. They perhaps would favor a more tolerant, less domineering approach but remind one of those referred to in Jesus' words recorded at John 12:42, 43. They express themselves, but not to the point of "making waves." There remain those who do show a definite concern for organizational, as well as personal, authority. Even here I am personally reluctant to take any judgmental attitude toward them as individuals. The causes of certain attitudes can be difficult to fathom. With humans, the imposition of authority often is a sign of weakness and insecurity rather than strength. To work patiently with people, reason with them, to have confidence in the power of truth and seek to demonstrate the rightness of a position in the face of adverse attitudes, and, by word and example, to build people up in faith and love and understanding, is a far more difficult, far more demanding task than simply to order people to do things, legislate and impose rules, and suppress questioning by a show of authority.[49] The latter is the course of weakness, and even as husbands, parents, employers and others all too often succumb to it, sometimes out of exasperation or a feeling of helplessness, so do men in religious systems. And what is true of the authority structure of the Watch Tower organization in this respect is true of other religious organizations as well.

So, as I stated in *Crisis of Conscience*, my belief is that the fundamental evil lies in the *concept* of divinely ordained exclusive authority vested in the Watch Tower organization, along with the view that only by the exercise of such authority can unity, order and productivity be achieved. If not all, then certainly some of the

49 Compare Proverbs 16:32; 2 Timothy 2:24, 25; James 3:13-18; 1 Peter 5:1-7.

men of the Governing Body have been victimized by that concept, entrapped by its appeal to fleshly thinking.

The seductive *deceptiveness* of authority's appeal, however, does not free us from responsibility. Though much of what exists today is, as has been shown, a legacy of the past—even of the distant past before ever the Watch Tower organization and its various presidents and leaders came on the scene—it is still a legacy that does not have to be accepted. The unscripturalness of the Watch Tower organization's exalted claims and infringement on divine authority certainly is discernible, and this produces a degree of responsibility for both promoters and supporters. To fail to see it because of not wanting to see it is no escape from that responsibility. The stage has been reached where, for many, possibly the majority, to listen to the organization is to listen to God, to reject its message and teaching is to show disrespect for God. Even to be hesitant to receive its interpretations or, far worse, to doubt them, is to show lack of faith in God and to doubt Him. Nor should any person ever think that his or her mental abilities are capable of understanding Scripture without the direction of the Brooklyn-based organization. Walking with it, wherever it may lead, is walking with God. To see that it is heading down a wrong path and refrain from following it is evidence of an independent and rebellious spirit. To see what the right understanding is before it does and—worst of all, to speak about it—is a sign of presumption, of running ahead of God. I cannot but feel that the spirit of the "man of lawlessness" has been operative in producing such a situation, working in similar ways to what it has effected in the past.

The equation of the organization with God among Witnesses is almost palpable and is deeply embedded in the minds of most members, far more than they may realize. I do not believe that all make this equation, for I know individuals, even a few in prominent positions, who have expressed themselves as unable to give full credence to the exalted claims made. But I am also quite certain that to avoid this equation requires a constant "editing" in their own minds of published statements, mentally reshaping and remolding extreme statements—in reality adjusting them to say something different from what they actually say—so as to justify acceptance of them. There is a continual rationalizing of their reasons for passively submitting to the leadership's calls for implicit submission and loyalty. And, with all this, they must exercise constant caution to assure that their actual feelings are not evident to others.

Surely this cannot be called Christian freedom.

5

The Faithful and Discreet Slave

> *Who really is the faithful and discreet slave whom his Master appointed over his domestics, to give them their food at the proper time? Happy is that slave if his master on arriving finds him doing so. Truly I say to you, He will appoint him over all his belongings.*—Matthew 24:45-47.

IN THEIR calls for loyalty and submission, no other portion of Scripture is so frequently appealed to by the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses as that found in the verses quoted above.

Their claims of organizational authority rest not only upon their interpretation of this parabolic statement of Jesus Christ, but more especially upon *the way they make use of that interpretation* . It is employed primarily to support the concept of a *centralized administrative authority*, exercising extensive control over all members of the Christian congregation (understood by Witnesses as applying only to themselves).

As discussed in Chapter 4, during Russell's presidency someone applied the figure of "the faithful and wise servant" to him personally. He clearly accepted the designation, as seen by his statements. He argued against the thought of its applying to Christ's body members as a whole and in favor of its predicting the appearance of a special servant, an individual, at 'God's appointed time.' Rutherford, during the first decade of his presidency, found it difficult to achieve anything like the enormous influence his predecessor had held. Unlike Russell, Rutherford had not been selected as sole "Pastor" of Watch Tower affiliates. He spent much of the first decade struggling to gain support and control and to deal with the fallout of doubting brought on by the failure of Watch Tower time prophecies. During those years he argued vehemently that Russell was indeed "that servant" and that all the things taught by him, including the dates he set, were accurate beyond any doubt. Once he had gained total control this ceased and a reverse course set in, with more and more of Russell's views being replaced or even discredited. Little reference was made to "the faithful and discreet slave" parable. It was not needed. Rutherford had brought in

the near magical term "organization" and also stressed the "Theocracy" (God rule). His expression of God's ruling the organization "from the top down, and not the bottom up" typifies the character of his presidency, for on earth he was beyond question "the top."[1] The "faithful and wise servant" now came to be identified as 'the body of God's consecrated people.' For many years now it is stated to be the collective body of all "anointed" Christians living on earth at any one time, from Pentecost on through the centuries until the present. The March 1, 1981, *Watchtower,* page 24, thus says:

> Witnesses of Jehovah understand that the "slave" is composed of all anointed Christians as a group on earth at any given time during the 19 centuries since Pentecost. Accordingly, the "domestics" are these followers as individuals.

Of itself there is nothing objectionable with this presentation. In effect, it says simply that the parable's presentation regarding the slave applies to all Christians living in any period, since, in Scripture, all true Christians are shown to be anointed of God.[2] Of course the Watch Tower Society does not view all Christians as anointed and divides Christians living today into two classes, a non-anointed class with an earthly hope, and an anointed class with a heavenly hope.

As *individuals*, the "anointed" ones are said to be represented by the "domestics" who are fed by the "slave," while the "slave" represents them all as a *collective body*. Again, of itself this is not without some Scriptural parallel, as in the often-quoted example of Isaiah 43:10-12, where Jehovah speaks of the nation of Israel as "my servant" (singular) and of the individuals composing the nation as all being "my witnesses" (plural). It is in the Watch Tower's *application* of the principle that problems arise. Today, this "slave class" is said to be composed of a "remnant" of the 144,000 anointed ones yet alive on earth. In 2005, their number is listed at approximately 8,600.[3]

Consider how the Watch Tower's publications build on this interpretational foundation and the extremes to which it leads them. It becomes apparent that the overriding concern is to authenticate—and enforce—the view that God and Christ deal with people only through

1 See Chapter 4, pages 84-87; see also the documentation of this in *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 61-79.

2 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; 1 John 2:20; compare Romans 8:8, 9, 12-14.

3 The *Watchtower*, February 1, 2005, page 22 (figure after "Memorial Partakers Worldwide").

an organization, and that today that organization is the one connected with the Watch Tower Society.

First we note the Watch Tower Society's teaching is that the "slave class" has had a *continuous, uninterrupted existence* from its beginning in 33 A.D. until the present time. The *Watchtower* of January 15, 1975, pages 46 and 47, emphasized this, saying:

> **Jesus had said: "Look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things." (Matt. 28:20) Jesus Christ is the Head of the congregation, his slave, and his words show that he would strengthen them to feed his "domestics" right down through the centuries. Apparently one generation of the "slave" class fed the succeeding generation thereof, as well as continuing to feed themselves.**
>
> **We see, then, that Jesus Christ himself called attention to this method of feeding his people not as isolated, independent individuals, but as a close-knit body of Christians having real love and care for one another.**

There is no question that there have been men and women who, as individuals, were true Christians during all the centuries. Jesus' words at Matthew 28:20 make this clear. This, however, is not what the *Watchtower* insists on. Rather it calls for the on-going existence of a "slave class" only as a "close-knit body." Down through the centuries, only through such a close-knit body has the spiritual food flowed. No allowance is made for Christ having fed any persons not connected with such a close-knit body, individuals who were isolated or in unconnected scattered groups of Christians.[4] What this translates to in actual fact is the concept that all these persons were tied together organizationally. This is clear when we consider the modern-day application of the "slave class" identification, from as far back as the July 15, 1943, *Watchtower*, which said (pages 215, 216):

> [23] The physical facts since A.D. 1878 down to 1918 prove that the small body of consecrated, spirit-begotten men and women who were and are unitedly serving Jehovah God and his Kingdom in conjunction with the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society match the prophetic description of the "servant". Therefore such ones, though bodily spread throughout the earth, yet unitedly co-operating by means of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, are the Lord's "servant" body on earth.

4 The September 15, 1983, *Watchtower*, pages 19, 20, states that, since Pentecost, by a "collective 'faithful steward' class," Christ sees to it that "all receive the same spiritual food."

The historical reality of such premise, of any close-knit, interrelated, composite body down through the centuries constituting the sole recipient of Christ's feeding and thereby becoming the sole channel of instruction from God for all Christians everywhere, is nowhere demonstrated or documented. It is simply asserted. The interpretation advanced and the organizational stance taken requires it. What does history actually reveal regarding this premise?

The Historical Record

One would think that in the post-apostolic period such a channel would logically be found in the main body of professed Christians, rather than in some isolated, fragmented "splinter groups" separating therefrom. But that main body is what eventually developed into Christendom, which the Watch Tower terms apostate. The "slave class" therefore must be found outside that system. Christians then were to be found in a very widespread area of the earth, in many nations and lands. Who formed this one and only "slave class," this unique collective group serving as God's sole channel of communication to supply "the same spiritual food" for the genuine Christians of the second, third and fourth centuries in all those places?

The Watch Tower Society's publications make no attempt to identify such a channel, offering as a reason that the entrance of apostasy "obscured" the identification of the "faithful and discreet slave" class.[5] So, the existence of such a "channel" during that period is simply assumed. What of the period since?

History is by no means silent on religious developments down through the centuries. It gives us not only a fairly complete picture of the stage-by-stage development of a universal Catholic church organization but also the disagreements and separations from that system and the formation of various movements leading up the Reformation and formation of Protestant denominations. Yet in all its records, nothing can be found that would acceptably fit the *Watchtower*'s description of a single, ongoing "faithful and discreet slave" class, a homogenous, close-knit, collective group functioning down through the centuries as the one and only feeding source for generation after generation of all genuine Christians in all places.

The *Watchtower* makes occasional reference to groups in the Middle Ages, such as the Waldenses, the Lollards, and similar groups, with at least the implication that they may

5 The *Watchtower* March 1, 1981, page 26.

have been among the genuine Christians of their time—which would make them part of the "faithful and discreet slave class."[6] The fact that often these religious fellowships believed such doctrines as the trinity, the immortality of the soul, and similar doctrines is generally glossed over. Yet the Watch Tower Society views these as among the most serious of all false doctrines, as cardinal errors. Furthermore these fellowships were basically regional, often restricted to one country or, at most, a few countries. None gives any evidence of serving as a unique channel supplying "the same spiritual food" to persons on an international scale, something that would be necessary unless we are to assume that all the "wheat" in the world field was at that time limited to just one or a few countries.

Rather than go back several centuries to the time of such groups as the Anabaptists (recently presented in a way that intimates their being a likely "link" in the chain), why not show a link in the more recent past, in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries when information is far more abundant?[7] Why not show at least those links of the "faithful and discreet slave" that would connect up with Russell and his founding of the Watch Tower Society in 1881? This would be the most logical and obvious starting point, from which the chain could then be traced backward.

A Chain of Invisible Links

The Watch Tower's claims require a chain of generation after generation of a close-knit slave class, with that chain eventually connecting up with Charles Taze Russell and the Watch Tower Society he founded. Reviewing his history, we find that as a young man Russell had separated from all religious affiliations due to his loss of faith in them. He later attended a Second Advent meeting but said that those present succeeded only in reestablishing his "wavering faith" in the divine inspiration of the Bible. At 18 years of age, Russell thereafter formed a "little Bible class" from among some associates.[8]

6 See the *Watchtower* of August 1, 1980, pages 24-28; August 1, 1981, page 15. An earlier publication, *Theocratic Aid to Kingdom Publishers* (page 307), went so far as to say of the Waldenses: "It is quite evident that the early Waldenses were faithful Witnesses of Jehovah"—the "evidence" apparently being their opposition to the Catholic Church's teachings as to saints, purgatory, masses, tradition, papal supremacy, papal pardons and indulgences and priestly celibacy. Yet that opposition is true of almost all Protestant religions.

7 The November 15, 1987, *Watchtower*, pages 21-23 discusses the Anabaptists, emphasizing similarities and minimizing or ignoring major differences with the Witnesses.

8 See the book *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, page 14, and , pages 19 and 20.

One might think that the Second Advent movement of young Russell's time was the "faithful and discreet slave," since he writes of being helped by such Second Adventists as George Storrs and George Stetson, and admittedly received his major time prophecies (including that involving 1914) from Second Adventist N. H. Barbour. He even became an associate editor of Barbour's magazine, the *Herald of the Morning*.[9] Yet the book *God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached*, on pages 185, 186, pointedly says of Russell's initial study group:

> Thirty years later found a small group of men, not associated with the Adventists or affiliated with any of the religious sects of Christendom, studying the Holy Scriptures at Pittsburgh (Allegheny), Pennsylvania, U.S.A. They studied independently so as to avoid looking at the Bible through sectarian spectacles.

Russell himself asserted that "Adventism helped me to no single truth," and he is portrayed in Society-approved publications as having to take down his Bible from the shelf and study it on his own, privately and independently.[10] Such a course today would be denounced as presumptuous, ineffectual, a rejection of God's channel, contrary to God's historical way of providing understanding of his Word through an organization. Remember the *Watchtower*'s statement:

> . . . the Bible is an organizational book and belongs to the Christian congregration as an organization, not to individuals, regardless of how sincerely they may believe that they can interpret the Bible. For this reason the Bible cannot be properly understood without Jehovah's visible organization in mind.[11]

The Society's official history *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, (page 17) further says of Russell:

> He was not the founder of a new religion, and never made such claim. He revived the great truths taught by Jesus and the apostles, and turned the light of the twentieth century upon these teachings. He made no claim of a special revelation from God, but held that it was God's due time for the Bible to be understood; and that, being fully consecrated to the Lord and to his service, he was permitted to understand it.

9 The Second Advent Movement actually formed no unified organization but was essentially a fragmented movement with only loose connections between the different groups. Many sources published information in different, unrelated magazines.

10 *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, pages 14, 15; *Faith on the March*, pages 19, 20. While it may be true that Second Adventism did not help Russell to any single *truth* Second Adventists certainly did provide him with a number of his views, including that of 1914. Furthermore, there were other magazines published by Second Adventists, such as Storrs' *Bible Examiner*, or Barbours' *Herald of the Morning*, that were very similar in content to Russell's *Zion's Watch Tower*.

11 The *Watchtower*, October 1, 1967, page 587.

Ron Frye, mentioned earlier, made an intensive study of this subject. Of the published statements just quoted, he writes:

> This, then, is the rootstock of the beginning of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society as explained in their own words. It completely repudiates their carefully laid premise regarding the so-called faithful and discreet slave class. By the year 1870 when young Russell began his independent study of the Bible, the so-called faithful and discreet slave class would have been more than 1800 years old.
>
> The question has to be answered: Where was this faithful and discreet slave congregation? How could Russell 'revive the great truths taught by Jesus and the apostles' *independently of the channel of communication*, Jehovah's earthly organization? Moreover, if as the Watch Tower Society insists, the faithful slave had been feeding its members "progressively" down through the centuries, one generation feeding the succeeding generation thereof, *why would the great teachings of Jesus need to be revived*? They would not if the premise regarding the faithful and discreet slave class were true.

Perhaps the most telling evidence of all this is to be found in Russell's own writings. In the October 1, 1909, *Watch Tower* (quoted in Chapter 4), he has his "friends" saying that *for generations* all Bible study by them and their forefathers had been "all to no purpose." Only when the Lord sent them the "Bible Keys" through the Society which Russell formed, headed and controlled, were they able to come to the light. If, as presently taught, a "faithful and discreet slave *class*" as a "close-knit body" had been operative from Pentecost forward, with 'one generation feeding the succeeding generation,' where was it in the time of these persons and their forefathers? Had their generations somehow been skipped? Russell obviously did not believe in a continuing "class" as fulfilling that parabolic picture. How could he be part of an ongoing "faithful and discreet slave class" running from Pentecost right on through all the centuries when he himself did not believe in such concept? He clearly believed that the "faithful and discreet slave" first came on the scene in his own day, and he makes crystal clear that he himself had not gone to any "faithful and discreet slave class" for enlightenment.[12]

12 In the April 15, 1904, *Watch Tower*, Russell gives detailed arguments opposing the idea of a "composite steward" or "class" and in favor of a particular individual as the "faithful and wise servant."

Pointing to the underlying significance of these facts, Ron Frye says:

> Clearly, the roots of Jehovah's Witnesses flatly contradict the premise of the Watch Tower Society in regard to the so-called faithful and discreet slave class dogma. It is clear that in order to justify their authoritarian system they must argue that Jehovah is using an organization as an earthly channel that all must submit to and accept. But to insist upon it today they must consistently argue that this has been the situation from the beginning in 33 A.D. and that this has *always* been God's way. Yet the fact remains that Russell did not turn to any such earthly organization. *He acted independently, on his own.*

Thus, in its efforts to deny that Jesus Christ is now dealing, or would ever deal, with individuals apart from an organization, a unique "channel," the teaching produces an untenable position. It claims that Christ did precisely that in dealing with Russell as an individual apart from any organization. If it is admitted that the post-apostolic period is not particularly easy to research, it must be admitted that the mid-1800s are far, far easier to research. Yet not a single link of the supposed continuous chain of "slave" generations can be found to connect up with Russell and his *Watch Tower* magazine. The Watch Tower publications thus can only point to the first link (the first century Christians) and the last link (based on the claims the Watch Tower organization makes for itself) of the chain. Any connecting links must be assumed since they prove invisible. Moreover, they pull the foundation out from under their own argument. For they show that their final link began totally contrary to the organizational standpoint, that it began with *individuals*, unconnected with any organization. This facet of their carefully constructed teaching about the "faithful and discreet slave class" proves to be a mere "house of cards" which their own statements cause to fall flat.

Generations of a "Slave class" Conveying Ever-Increasing Light?

Something that seriously compounds the problem for the Watch Tower organization in its claims, as Ron Frye recognized, is the constant application of Proverbs 4:18 ("But the path of the righteous ones is like the bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established") as referring to some kind of continuously progressive advancement in doctrinal knowledge and Scriptural understanding.[13]

13 An examination of the context shows that the text actually has no such application but refers to the *life course* of the righteous man, his path of godly conduct, as contrasted with the " *way* of the wicked ones." See verses 14-17, 19.

In reality, the organization presents two contradictory positions. On the one hand it says that "the light consistently gets brighter and brighter" and on the other it says that apostasy produced such great and continuing darkness for long centuries that Russell and the Watch Tower Society had to "revive the great truths taught by Jesus and the apostles." It never attempts to resolve this obvious contradiction, but continues to talk about the "bright light that keeps getting lighter and lighter." As just one example, we find this statement in the July 15, 1960, *Watchtower*, page 435:

> **14 Down through the years the slavelike congregation has been feeding its true members faithfully and discreetly. From Pentecost, A.D. 33, up to this very present hour this has been lovingly and carefully performed. Yes, and these "domestics" have been fed on progressive spiritual food that keeps them abreast of the "bright light that is getting lighter and lighter until the day is firmly established." (Prov. 4:18) All this has proved to be "food at the proper time," as stated by Jesus.**

On this, Ron Frye comments:

> According to this last quotation the slave has not only always been nourished by wholesome spiritual food but it has been nourished by *progressive spiritual food*, not regressing, not remaining static, but *always moving forward spiritually with the increasing light of truth*. This, then, is the carefully laid premise regarding the Watch Tower Society's teaching of the faithful and discreet slave illustration of Matthew chapter 24. It came into existence on Pentecost day of 33 [A.D.] and was to have a continuous, uninterrupted history down through the centuries, up to and including the end of the world; all the while it would be 'progressively feeding' its members on spiritual food, becoming increasingly enlightened as time went on. The question to be answered, then, is how does the history of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society dovetail or square with this premise? If we enforce the consequences of the Society's interpretation of Matthew 24:45-47, what do we find? If their history does not square with their own premise, then the premise is demonstrably false.

If the claimed application were valid, it would mean that each succeeding century would have seen a growth in understanding, in clarity of doctrinal teaching, with each succeeding generation

of the "faithful and discreet slave" class passing on such increased illumination to the next generation. By the time of the Waldenses and Lollards in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries there should have been a tremendous growth in understanding. And by the 1870s, when Charles Taze Russell came on the scene, the light already being enjoyed by the "slave" class should logically have progressed to a point of shining with dazzling brilliance.

Recall the claim made by Governing Body member Karl Klein, as later expressed in the *Watchtower* of February 15, 1981:

> No question about it. We all need help to understand the Bible, and <u>we cannot find the Scriptural guidance we need outside the "faithful and discreet slave" organization</u>.

If that statement genuinely expresses an unchanging principle as to God's way of directing His servants, then it was valid and true in Russell's time. Russell, then, should certainly have gone to the "faithful and discreet slave class" of his day and received the brilliant light then shining, according to the doctrine of 'the light growing brighter and brighter.' The Watch Tower Society's publications say he did no such thing. He did just the opposite and, inexplicably, was apparently uniquely exempt from needing to adhere to such principle, he alone being able to study the Bible independently of any "faithful and discreet slave organization" and still understand it.

Obviously, there was no already-existing, eighteen-centuries-old "faithful and discreet slave" class which Russell and his associates felt they could go to and fellowship with and receive the great accumulation of spiritual light that the passage of the centuries should have brought. Their need for *independent study* is stressed in Watch Tower publications. This would make it appear that, after eighteen centuries of Jesus' fulfilling his promise to be with his followers and to guide, support and bless them, true Christianity on earth had been reduced to just this handful of Americans meeting together in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania! To take the organization's teaching for what it says, this is the extreme to which we would have to go.

Faithfully Providing Food at the Right Time

The official teaching is that, by the year 1919, Christ Jesus designated those persons affiliated with the Watch Tower organization as his "faithful and discreet slave class," his chosen channel. Of the factors involved in the choice, the book *God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached* (written by Fred Franz and

published in 1975) says (page 350):

> 40 The serving of food, the right sort of food, at the proper time was the issue. It had to be according to this that a decision must be rendered by the returned master. Well, then, what about that body of Christians internationally hated and persecuted? (Matthew 24:9) Down to 1919 C.E. they had endeavored to give "food at the proper time" to the "household of faith" or the "domestics" of the heavenly Master. They did this despite interference by persecutors and the warring nations. Not only was the regularity in serving the spiritual food a problem, but the quality of the food itself was to be considered. In this respect the body of hated, persecuted Christians, who always sought to be faithful slaves of Jesus Christ. met the test.

In all the earth, of all religious groups, the organization producing the Watch Tower publications alone "met the test." Not only had they served spiritual food but "the right kind of food, at the proper time." Not only their regularity but "the *quality* of the food itself was to be considered." What is the organization's proof of their demonstrating "exceptional faithfulness and discretion" as regards God's Word, what proof that the "quality" of their food was clearly superior to any other being supplied, and of its being just the "right kind" at the "right time"?

Consider now some examples of what was actually being served by the Watch Tower organization as spiritual food during the period bracketing the claimed year of test, 1919.

Exemplary Discretion or Lamentable Indiscretion?

> *In the abundance of words there does not fail to be transgression, but the one keeping his lips in check is acting discreetly.—Proverbs 10:19.*

In the book *Crisis of Conscience* detailed documentation has been provided showing that after Russell's death in 1916 the Watch Tower organization continued to advocate forcefully the authenticity of the time prophecies regarding 1799 (as the start of the "last days"), 1874 (as the time of the beginning of Christ's "invisible presence"), and 1878 (when Christ assumed his kingly power and began his time of judgment), though floundering as to what to say about the failure of predictions centered on the year 1914.[14]

14 *Crisis of Conscience,* pages 179-190.

Consider now what took place in 1917. Remember that, according to the Watch Tower's present-day "adjusted" teaching, Christ Jesus *had by then already been officially ruling as enthroned king for three years*. In 1917, the Watch Tower organization printed a book called *The Finished Mystery*. This book was said to be 'the message of the hour.' Since it is steadfastly argued that the "light shines ever brighter," this noteworthy new publication logically should have been prime evidence of the "quality" of the food being served, something the recently installed King could use as a worthy example in his testing which channel could be counted on to serve quality food.

Note some of the predictions made about the years 1918 and 1920 in these sections dealing with Revelation chapter sixteen and Ezekiel chapters twenty-four and thirty-five:

258 *The Finished Mystery* REV. 16

To give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of [His] THE wrath.—The wine of the vine of the earth.—Rev. 14:17-20; Jer. 8:14; Isa. 51:17-20; Jer. 25:26-28; Rev. 18:6.

16:20. And every island fled away.—Even the republics will disappear in the fall of 1920.

And the mountains were not found.—Every kingdom of earth will pass away, be swallowed up in anarchy.

16:21. And there fell upon men.—Greek "The Men," the worshipers of the beast and his image, i. e., the clergy.

A great hail out of heaven.—Truth, compacted, coming with crushing force. A concluding statement of how the seventh volume of *Scripture Studies* appers to the worshipers of the beast and his image.—Rev. 11:19; Isa, 28:17; 30:30; Ezek. 13:11; Joshua 10:11.

Every stone about the weight of a talent.—113 lbs. (Mal. 3:10.) Another view of the seventh volume of *Scripture Studies*, as it appears to the worshipers of the beast and his image, is found in the last of the Egyptian plagues, the death of the first-born, Exodus 11th. and 12th. chapters.

The three days in which Pharaoh's host pursued the Israelites into the wilderness represent the three years from 1917 to 1920 at which time all of Pharaoh's messengers will be swallowed up in the sea of anarchy. The wheels will come off their chariots—organizations.

24:24. Thus Ezekiel is unto you a sign: according to all that he hath done shall ye do: and when this cometh, ye shall know that I am the Lord God.—Thus the silent sorrow at Pastor Russell's heart was to be a sign to Christendom. The sorrowful experiences of Pastor Russell in this connection shall later on be those of all Christendom; "and when this cometh" they shall know that Jehovah God is supreme, and back of all the judgments of the trouble time.

PASTOR RUSSELL DEAD, BUT SPEAKING AGAIN

24:25, 26. Also, thou son of man, shall it not be in the day when I take from them their strength, the joy of their glory, the desire of their eyes, and that whereupon they set their minds, their sons and their daughters. That he that escapeth in that day shall come unto thee, to cause thee to hear it with thine ears?—Also, in the year 1918, when God destroys the churches wholesale and the church members by millions, it shall be that any that escape shall come to the works of Pastor Russell to learn the meaning of the downfall of "Christianity."

35:14. Thus saith the Lord God; When the whole earth rejoiceth, I will make thee desolate.—When the Times of Restitution of all things come, one of the things not to be restored is the Socialist, laborite movement. When all society rejoices in the new order of things ordained of God, the Socialistic state will have been utterly and forever desolated.

35:15. As thou didst rejoice at the inheritance of the house of Israel, because it was desolate, so will I do unto thee; thou shalt be desolate, O mount Seir, and all Idumea, even all of it: and they shall know that I am the Lord.—As the fleshly-minded apostates from Christianity, siding with the radicals and revolutionaries, will rejoice at the inheritance of desolation that will be Christendom's after 1918, so will God do to the successful revolutionary movement; it shall be utterly desolated, "even all of it." Not one vestige of it shall survive the ravages of world-wide all-embracing anarchy, in the fall of 1920. (Rev. 11:7-13.)[15]

The book specialized in the prophecy of Ezekiel and the book of Revelation. Everything that related to Ezekiel himself was applied to Pastor Russell, the modern-day Ezekiel. Aside from the failed time prophecies regarding 1918 and 1920, consider the book's explanation of Revelation 14:20, as indicative of the kind of "food" served in this publication. The Bible account itself reads:

> And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out of the wine press as high up as the bridles of the horses, for a distance of a thousand six hundred furlongs.

Using Rotherham's translation which gives "a thousand two hundred furlongs" (instead of a thousand six hundred), this is the explanation the book (page 230) gives as fulfillment of the text:

By the space of a thousand and [six] TWO hundred furlongs.—This can not be interpreted to refer to the 2100 mile battle line of the world war. A furlong or stadium is

15 *The Finished Mystery*, 1918 edition, pages 258, 485, 542. When the 1924 edition of this book was published, the dates found in such quotations were eliminated almost without exception.

not a mile and this is without the city whereas the battle line is within the city. See Rotherham's translation.
A stadium is 606¾ English ft.; 1200 stadii are, mi., 137.9

The work on this volume was done in Scranton, Pa. As fast as it was completed it was sent to the Bethel. Half of the work was done at an average distance of 5 blocks from the Lackawanna station, and the other half at a distance of 25 blocks. Blocks in Scranton are 10 to the mile. Hence the average distance to the station is 15 blocks, or..... 1.5 mi.

The mileage from Scranton to Hoboken Terminal is shown in time tables as 143.8 and this is the mileage charged to passengers, but in 1911, at an expense of $12,000,000, the Lackawanna Railroad completed its famous cut-off, saving 11 miles of the distance. From the day the cut-off was completed the trainmen have been allowed 11 miles less than the time table shows, or a net distance of..... 132.8 "

Hoboken Ferry to Barclay Street Ferry, New York, is..... 2.0 "

Barclay Street Ferry to Fulton Ferry, New York, is 4,800 feet or..... 0.9 "

Fulton Ferry, New York, to Fulton Ferry, Brooklyn, is 2,000 feet or..... 0.4 "

Fulton Ferry, Brooklyn, to Bethel, is 1,485 feet or ..... 0.3 "

Shortest distance from place where the winepress was trodden by the Feet Members of the Lord, Whose guidance and help alone made this volume possible. (John 6:60, 61; Matt. 20:11.).....mi., 137.9

Of comparable "quality" is what the book calls the "corrected translation of Job 40:15 to 41:34," with comments thereon, presented on pages 84 to 86. The book of Job there speaks of "behemoth" and "leviathan" (understood today by the Watch Tower Society and others to be references to the *hippopotamus* and the *crocodile*).[16] I would recommend that one first read the actual words found in Job. Then consider this "corrected translation" by "one of Pastor Russell's followers" in *The Finished Mystery* book. First, of "behemoth" it says:

The following is a corrected translation of Job 40:15 to 41:34, with comments thereon from the pen of one of Pastor Russell's followers: "Behold now one with great heat [the stationary steam engine], which I have made to

16 See for example the renderings of these passages in *An American Translation,* the *New American Bible* (footnotes), the *Jerusalem Bible*, and the *Revised Standard Version.*

be with thee; he will consume fodder [peat, wood, coal] as do cattle. Behold now his strength is in his loins [boiler plates], and his power is within the parts bent in a circle [boiler shell] of his belly. His tail [smoke stack—opposite the feeding end] will set upright like a cedar; the couplings of his leaping parts [connecting rods, pitmans] will be clamped together. His bones are tubes of copper; his solid bones [grate bars] are as hammered-out bars of iron. He is the greatest of the ways of power. He that made him [the Lord] can make His sword [Word] to approach unto [reveal] him. [Isa. 27:1, 2.] He shall rest under thin shelter [steam jackets] within a covering of fibrous reeds [jute] and clay [mortar]. The willows of the valley [the trees overhead] will enclose him around about. Behold [as a pumping engine] he will drink up an overflowing river without much exertion; he will cause the people to trust [that their cellars will keep dry], though a Jordan should rush forth over its border. He will gather it up in his fountains by means of traps and with a perforated nozzle.

The Watch Tower writer then gives this explanation defining "leviathan" as, not a *stationary* steam engine such as is used in mills or factories, but a *locomotive:*

"Thou wilt lengthen out leviathan [the locomotive] with a hook [automatic coupler] or with a snare [coupling-pin] which thou wilt cause his tongue [coupling-link] to drop down. Wilt thou not place a ring [piston] in his nostrils [cylinders] or pierce through his cheeks [piston-ends] with a staff [piston-rod]? Will he make repeated supplication unto thee [to get off the track]? Or will he utter soft tones unto thee [when he screeches with the whistle]? Will he make a covenant with thee, that thou mayest take him for a servant forever [without repairs]? Wilt thou play with him as with a bird [make him whistle at will]? Or wilt thou bind [enslave] him for thy maidens [so that you can take them to a picnic or convention]? Companies [of stockholders] will feast upon him [his earnings]; they will share him among speculators. [Psa. 74:14.] Thou wilt fill his skin with pointed irons [bolts], and his head with a cabin of fishermen [a cab similar to the cabins on fishing vessels]. Place thy hand upon him, be mindful of the conflict [raging within the boiler] and thou wilt add no further questions. Behold, his confidence [boiler] being deceived [not properly supplied with water], shall not at once his mighty form be spread asunder [by an explosion]? There is none so bold that he will stir him up [to run at his very highest possible speed], and none who will then place himself before him [to be run over]. Who will compete with this one and endure [pass him on the track]? Under the whole heaven, none, unless [one like] himself.

"I will not pass in silence his members, nor the cause of his mighty forces, nor the beauty of his equipment. Who can strip off the facings of his jacket? Who can penetrate

between the double lap of his shield [the overlapping sections of the boiler plates]? Who can force open the doors of his shield [the boiler ends]? The circuits of his teeth [rows of rivets] are formidable. His strength depends on courses of shields [sections of plates] closed up tightly with a seal [calked]. They shall join one upon another so that a hiss of air [steam] shall not escape from between them. One to the other shall adhere. They will be welded together that they cannot be sundered. In his sneezing [when he puffs from the cylinders] light will shine, a flood of light prevading the mass of vapors: and his eyes [headlights] will be as the eyelashes of the morning [as rays of light from the rising sun]. Out of his mouth [fire-door] will leap forth flaming torches, and [from the smoke stack] glowing sparks will slip themselves away. From his nostrils [cylinders] will issue forth vapor as from a boiling pot or caldron. His inhaling [forced draft] will vivify burning coals, and a flame will leap forth from his mouth. Within his neck abideth strength, and a desolation will dance with joy [become a prosperous community] at his presence. The separable parts of his body are connected together; all will be made fast upon him; nothing will be shaky. His heart will be indurated similar to a stone, and will be firm as a piece of the lower [rocks]. When at his full speed the most courageous will fear [lest], from accidents, they lose themselves. When dryness exalteth him [or renders him furious], he will not have power to withhold; the curved vault [fire box] being caused to tear away, and also the armor. He will esteem iron as straw, and brass as rotten wood. The archer cannot make him flee; missiles [of war] will be turned unto him as chaff. The [strokes of a] hammer will be esteemed as chaff; he will rejoice at the poking of the fireman. Hewed [or notched] timbers of the craftsman [ties] are under him; he will spread an embankment [or trench] upon the mire. He will [as a marine engine] cause deep [places] to become as a boiling pot [about his propellers]; he will make the sea to appear like boiling ointment. He will make a path to shine after him; one will think the deep to be growing gray. [Psa. 104:26; Isa. 27:1.] Upon the earth there is not his like—he that is [so] constructed that he can fear nothing. He can oversee [control by his work] all that which is great; he is indeed king over all conceptions of power."

The prophecy of Nahum, chapter two, verses 3 to 6, contains this passage (as rendered in the *King James Version*) directed against the city of Nineveh:

The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet; the chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken. The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways; they shall seem like torches, they shall

run like the lightnings. He shall recount his worthies; they shall stumble in their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defence shall be prepared. The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved.

In this long-awaited "Seventh Volume" on page 93, *The Finished Mystery* writer gives this explanation of the above passage:

(18) *Nahum* was the next one of the holy Prophets; and after prophesying in the last verse of the preceding chapter about the coming of the King with His good tidings of peace to the sin-burdened earth, he next tells (Nahum 2:3-6) of an interesting thing that will be a matter of common everyday experience at the time the Kingdom is established. He describes a railway train in motion [not an automobile, as some think], and if we will be at the trouble to put ourselves in the Prophet's place we can see just what he saw in his vision and what he has so interestingly described. First, the Prophet stands looking at the engine coming toward him, and then says, "The shield [the thing ahead of this great warrior—the headlight] is made red [shines brilliantly], the valiant men [the engineer and the fireman] are dyed scarlet [when the flames from the firebox illuminate the interior of the cab at night, as the fireman opens the firedoor to throw in the coal]. The chariots [the railway coaches] shall be with [shall be preceded by locomotives that, at night, have the appearance of] flaming torches, in the Day of Preparation."

Next the Prophet takes his place in the train and looks out of the window, and, seemingly, "The fir trees shall be terribly shaken [the telegraph poles alongside the track seem to be fairly dancing]. The chariots shall rage in the streets [a railway is merely an elaborate, scientifically constructed street, or highway], they shall justle one against another in the broad ways [the clanking and bumping of the cars together is one of the significant items of railway travel]. They shall seem like torches [a railway train at night, rushing through a distant field, looks like nothing so much as a vast torch, going at flying speed], they shall run like the lightnings." Next the Prophet sees the conductor coming for his ticket and says, "He shall recount his worthies [the conductor spends his entire time, almost, counting and recounting his passengers, keeping them checked up, etc.]; they shall stumble in their walk [try walking on a rapidly moving train]; they shall make haste to the wall thereof [to the next city or town] and the coverer [the train shed, the station] shall be prepared [the baggageman, expressman, mail wagon, hotel bus, intending passengers, and friends to meet incoming passengers, will all be there waiting for the train to come]. The gates of the rivers shall be opened [the doors of the cars will be opened and the people will flow out] and the palace [car] shall be dissolved [emptied]."

At Revelation chapter nineteen, verse 10, we are told, "the bearing witness to Jesus is what inspires prophesying." That being so, the 'newly enthroned' King reasonably should have considered with great interest the explanations of prophecy and the predictions put forth in this publication, coming from an organization claiming to be his chosen messenger, his "channel" of information. In his judging work he would naturally examine this "timely" message, supposedly from God, a publication offered to all mankind in a period of great crisis amid the suffering of World War I. As the December 15, 1977, *Watchtower* (page 751) states:

> Their faithfulness and spiritual wisdom in the Master's service determines their worthiness to be put in charge of all the earthly belongings of their Master.

The examples that have been set out are not unusual exceptions. One need only read *The Finished Mystery* book to see that they are typical of the kind of material found in the book as a whole. They are not presented simply to show what incredibly imaginative silliness—and I do not think this term is here misused or unfair—men are capable of when they hold the religious concept these writers did. They are presented because Witnesses—reading the claims of the clear superiority of the Watch Tower organization in "spiritual wisdom" over all other religious sources of "spiritual food" in that period—have heard a very slanted presentation. Most of them have absolutely no means for investigating the reality, since the Watch Tower publications of that time are not available to them. It must be remembered that, according to the Watch Tower Society, this period was one of great historical and divine significance, both for the organization and for the world, a crucial period in which the organization's selection by God as His channel to all mankind was at stake, dependent greatly on what the Master found in making his inspection of the feeding being done. This book played a very prominent part in that history.[17] The 1988 publication *Revelation—Its Grand Climax Is At Hand!* (page 165) describes *The Finished Mystery* as "a powerful commentary on Revelation and Ezekiel"! A review of its contents forces one to wonder if the writer of those words had even read the book or given it any serious consideration. I sincerely doubt that the organization today would consider reprinting a single chapter, in fact any portion whatsoever of that book. It would prove painfully embarrassing. Yet the publishing of *The Finished Mystery* book is often referred to in the Society's later publications as a milestone event.[18]

17 The book's writers, C. J. Woodworth and G. H. Fischer, were selected by the Watch Tower president and two other members of the board of directors, hence by the administrative part of the "discreet slave" class.

18 See, for example, *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose,* pages 70 to 78, 89, 90.

The book's release to the "Bethel family" is said to have produced a "bombshell" precipitating a five-hour controversy.[19] In later Watch tower publications, the book is presented as a sort of "litmus test" of loyalty for that period.[20]

It was the publication of *The Finished Mystery* book that led to the trial in federal court of Watch Tower president Rutherford and other Society officials and their subsequent imprisonment.[21] It seems incredible that men would be willing to undergo loss of freedom for a publication so filled with what can only be termed nonsensical material. Yet the imprisonment resulting from this book was later presented as an event of great prophetic importance, pictured on the one hand as part of the cause for the unjust putting to death of the "two witnesses" depicted at Revelation 11:3-7, and on the other as connected with the 'going away into captivity to Babylon the Great.'[22] The official history, *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, on page 91, says that in 1919 (when their claimed release from "Babylon the Great" came) the brothers "recognized that a compromise had been made [in 1918] by cutting out pages 247-253 of *The Finished Mystery* in order to please those who had assumed the position of censor." Today the organization has, in effect, cut out not only those pages but the whole book. Yet the action taken back there is presented in this official history as though it were a "compromise" displeasing to the newly enthroned King.[23]

At the time that Christ Jesus was supposedly selecting the Watch Tower organization because of its discreet and faithful distribution of quality spiritual food at the right time, the principal public lecture being given was on the subject "Millions Now Living Will Never Die." This talk was first delivered by J. F. Rutherford in 1918, continued to be presented into the early 1920s and was also published in printed

19 *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, pages 70, 71. Four of the seven directors had not been consulted over the project and were in fact dismissed from their positions earlier on the day of the book's release.

20 *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose,* pages 78, 91.

21 *Ibid.*, pages 79, 80.

22 *Ibid.*, page 79-84; *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, pages 167-169. The latter book says of the silencing by death of the "two witnesses": "The public press joined the clergy in vilifying God's people, one paper saying: 'The finish of the *The Finished Mystery* has been given.' Nothing, though, could have been further from the truth!"

23 These pages contain a commentary on Revelation 16:3, relating to "three unclean spirits coming out of the mouth of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet." The "dragon" was Satan, the "beast" was the "Papal system," the "false prophet," was the "Protestant sects" (the "image" of the "Papal beast"). The majority of the pages were devoted to quotations containing strong castigation of the military systems of the world and of war in general.

form. A worldwide campaign was instituted, all focusing on this subject.[24] Watch Tower publications in more recent times still speak of that subject in favorable terms, describing how extensive and intensive the campaign was, how many millions of copies of the lecture were distributed and referring to the speech as "an astounding talk," "an epoch-making Bible lecture."[25] The 1988 publication (page 173) lists it in connection with the blowing of the second of the "seven trumpets" referred to at Revelation chapter eight, verse 6.

These publications do not, however, inform their readers that the prime message of the talk and the basis for its rather sensational title was the claim that *1925 would mark the start of the millennium.* The publication *Millions Now Living Will Never Die* (page 97) stated that "the great jubilee cycle is due to begin in 1925," that "we may confidently expect that 1925 will mark the return of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the faithful prophets of old," and summed up the claim in these words:

> Based upon the argument heretofore set forth, then, that the old order of things, the old world, is ending and is therefore passing away, and that the new order is coming in, and that 1925 shall mark the resurrection of the faithful worthies of old and the beginning of reconstruction, it is reasonable to conclude that millions of people now on the earth will be still on the earth in 1925. Then, based upon the promises set forth in the divine Word, we must reach the positive and indisputable conclusion that millions now living will never die.[26]

Remember that, along with the book *The Finished Mystery*, this booklet was, up until 1923, a principal publication used in the worldwide proclamation being made. Honestly considered, these could hardly have been "true spiritual food at the right time" such as the "faithful and discreet slave" was supposed to provide. Yet the book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!* (page 164) says

24 *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose,* page 98, 100. On page 110 this publication refers to the period of that campaign (1919 to 1922) as "the period of restoration of true worship."

25 *1975 Yearbook of Jehovah's Witnesses*, page 127; the *Watchtower*, October 1, 1979, page 26; July 1, 1983, page 18.

26 *Millions Now Living Will Never Die* (1920), page 97. See *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 212-215 for more detailed documentation of this publication.

of the "two witnesses" of Revelation 11:3-7 (applied as referring to the "anointed" Witnesses in the 1914-1918 period) that, "The fact that they were symbolized by two witnesses confirms to us that their message was accurate and well founded." I think it is reasonable to say that the writer feels safe in making such a statement only because the organization no longer publishes or stocks *The Finished Mystery*, *Millions Now Living Will Never Die* or any other of the publications of that supposedly "historic" period.

A direct investigation of the publications of the Watch Tower organization in the years from 1914 to 1919 reveals none of the prudent discretion that causes a man to 'keep his lips in check.' It would be an insult to Christ Jesus to say that he selected this organization on the basis of what it was teaching, *uniquely* and *distinctively*, as of 1919. An abundance of words flowed out that later proved embarrassing to remember, along with a rash of new time prophecies that proved as erroneous as the past ones. Even the hard school of experience seemed to have taught them no lesson.

Rewarded for Faithfulness

> Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much.—Matthew 25:21, Revised Standard Version.

The slave of Jesus' parable was not only to have exemplary *discretion* but also exemplary *faithfulness*, which would lead to his Master's rewarding him. According to the Watch Tower organization this was fulfilled in 1919 when Christ appointed that organization to the position of manager of all Christ's earthly interests.

Testing the Watch Tower organization's claim, Ron Frye reviewed what the organization now says *about its own record* in the period of 1914-1918, "the period when, according to them, they were being evaluated for enlarged privileges of service on earth by the glorified Jesus Christ." In the November 15, 1980, *Watchtower* (pages 26, 27), he found that the organization described its situation in this way:

> Like the Israelites of Isaiah's day, the spiritual Israelites [Jehovah's Witnesses] "sold themselves because of wrong practices and came into bondage to the world empire of false religion, that is to say, to

Babylon the Great and to he worldly paramours. An outstanding instance of this occurred during World War I of 1914-1918.

In the *Watchtower* of July 15, 1960, pages 435,436, he found another description:

> 18 Under the direction of this religious corporation the great world-wide campaign to announce the 1914 end of the "times of the nations" was undertaken, as mentioned earlier. The Watch Tower witnesses of Jehovah proved to be awake spiritual watchmen. But the Scriptures describe them as having unclean garments because of their long association with Christian apostasy. (Zech. 3:3, 4) They had many practices, characteristics and beliefs similar to the weedlike sects of Christendom. So from 1914 to 1918 a period of fiery testing came upon them, not unlike the ancient period of Babylonish captivity of the Jews back in 607-537 B.C.

The article then goes on to say:

> All this came to pass in connection with transgression on their part in having the fear of man, not conducting themselves in a strictly neutral way during the war years and being tainted with many religiously unclean practices. Jehovah and Jesus Christ permitted these witnesses to be reproached, persecuted, banned and their officers imprisoned by the nations of this old world.

Frye noted that they described themselves during this period as having "unclean garments," being contaminated with apostasy, wrong practices, characteristics that were "weedlike," having fear of man, 'selling themselves' because of these wrong practices.

He found all this paradoxical. Here the newly enthroned King, Christ Jesus, is supposed to be evaluating the *faithfulness* and *discretion* of this organization and at the same time they are found to be following a course like that which brought apostate Israel into Babylonish captivity!

Although I had sincerely tried, I had never been able to fathom the reasoning behind this teaching. On the one hand Christ Jesus is depicted as taking his great royal power in 1914 and going forth

"conquering and to conquer" (Revelation 6:2), while on the other hand the very start of his reign is portrayed as being quickly followed by the almost wholesale capture of his earthly servants by enemies who carry them off into bondage in "Babylon." Certainly not a very auspicious beginning for the conquering King.

Likening the Watch Tower adherents to the spiritually unclean Israelites of old also creates its own difficulties. *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* (page 91) lists some of the factors supposedly causing this "uncleanness" during the 1914-1918 period, including these:

> the belief that earthly governments are the "higher powers" or "superior authorities" described at Romans 13:1, with resulting fear of men;
>
> putting emphasis on "character development";
>
> "considerable creature worship in the organization";
>
> celebrating pagan holidays such as Christmas;
>
> using the symbol of the cross;[27]
>
> not using the name "Jehovah" as frequently as was done in later times;
>
> having a democratic form of congregational government.[28]

If these things made them "unclean"—so drastically that the newly enthroned King was obliged to abandon them to captivity, what must one assume? Surely that they would *have to be cleansed of these things* before they could come out from under his disfavor and be able to return to freedom. How much more so if, as we are told, they are to be promptly presented with lofty "privileges, responsibilities, dignities and honors," with "greater rank, authority and power," as the King's "prized slave."[29]

Yet, inexplicably, in 1919, when they are said to have "returned from Babylon," *they were still believing and practicing the identical things that are supposed to have made them unclean and which led to their captivity!*

They continued to do so for years thereafter, and in some areas (such as "creature worship") became more extreme, as in their

27 The cross is also viewed as a pagan symbol, the belief being that Jesus was impaled on an upright stake with no cross bar.

28 Essentially the same presentation of all these points is made in the May 1, 1989 issue of the magazine, pages 3, 4.

29 *God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached*, pages 354, 356.

praise of Pastor Russell and their absolute insistence that his teachings were the only means to an understanding of God's Word.[30]

As to the first evidence of "uncleanness" listed, namely the view of the "higher powers" of Romans chapter thirteen as the political governments, this teaching continued in place for *ten more years*, until 1929, when Rutherford declared that the "higher powers" referred to God and Christ and not to the earthly governments. Some thirty years later, his interpretation was rejected and the "unclean" view of previous times was reinstated as true, hence not "unclean" after all![31]

As for the next cause of "uncleanness," it is true that Rutherford sometime later did rule out for many years any articles on love, kindness, mercy, generosity and other such Christian qualities, considered by him as dealing with "character development" (their elimination allowing him to place the focus instead on "field service" and related organizational programs, and on prophetic interpretation). Yet, after his death such articles began to appear again, described now as helping members to "put on the new personality," in place of "developing a Christian character," certainly a distinction without a difference.

As for celebration of Christmas, I recall our family's celebrating it up to 1930 or thereabout. It was even celebrated at the Brooklyn headquarters (with Christmas gifts, tinsel and wreaths and all the traditional trappings) at least until 1926. Similarly, the cross (now viewed as a symbol of purely pagan origin) appeared on the front cover of every issue of the *Watch Tower* magazine up to October 15, 1931! (See following pages.)

It is true that the so-called "democratic form of congregational government" (by the congregational electing of elders) ended with Rutherford's elimination of elective elders in 1932, but this was after 1919. And it led to a virtual spiritual dictatorship with all authority ultimately vested in one person, the Watch Tower Society's president, Judge Rutherford. As discussed in *Crisis of Conscience* (pages 26-29), this policy also was rejected over forty years later by the reintroduction of bodies of elders (though not elective) in 1972 and the subsequent demotion of the corporation presidency from the seat of superior authority in 1975-76.[32]

30 *God's Kingdom of a Thousands Years Has Approached, pages 354, 356*

31 This continued until the late 1920s; see *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 179-190, for documentation from Watch Tower publications.

32 The Watch Tower's claim is that there was nonetheless progress made since previously members had not understood that their subjection to the "higher powers" was to be only relative. This is simply not true. The pre-1919 publications clearly show that this was understood. See Chapter 13, pages 484-487.

Watch Tower headquarters staff celebrating Christmas in Brooklyn Bethel dining room, 1926. J. F. Rutherford at head of center table.

The WATCH TOWER and Herald of Christ's Presence

"Watchman, What of the Night? The Morning Cometh, and also the Night"—Isaiah

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"I will stand upon my watch and will set my foot upon the Tower, and will watch to see what He will say unto me, and what answer I shall make to them that oppose me."—Habakkuk 2:1.

ROCK OF AGES
Other foundation can no man lay—
A RANSOM FOR ALL

Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. . . . When these things begin to come to pass, then know that the Kingdom of God is at hand. Look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.—Luke 21:25-31; Matthew 24:33; Mark 13:29.

Front cover of the January 1, 1931 *Watch Tower*. The use of the cross supposedly contributed to Watch Tower affiliates being viewed by Christ as "unclean" in the 1914-1918 period. Yet the *Watch Tower*'s cover still prominently displayed the cross up until October 15, 1931, *nearly a dozen years* after Christ's supposed selection in 1919 of the Watch Tower organization as his approved channel. The "cross and crown" design shown in the upper lefthand corner of the cover was also produced in a metallic form and worn as an adorning pin by Watch Tower affiliates.

One can therefore but ask: Why the supposed "captivity in Babylon" in 1918-1919? Why the "release from Babylon" in the spring of 1919, when the Watch Tower officials and adherents came out in the same condition as they went in? Why would Christ have picked out this admittedly error-plagued source of information as the example of faithfulness and discretion, as the only one passing the test and chosen as the sole avenue of communication through which the enthroned King would now send all guidance to mankind? And why would this "chosen channel" immediately embark upon a new false time-prophecy and build a major campaign (the "Millions campaign") to tell the world about 1925 and the start of the millennium due to come at that time—with the man directing the chosen "channel" later being obliged to admit (according to his own words) to having 'made an ass of himself' in connection with the unfulfilled prophecy based on that year?[33]

I found all this not simply puzzling but demeaning to the Word of God and to the wisdom, power and kingship of his Son. It seemed to be a confused effort to explain Scripture on the basis of an organization's experiences, rather than view the organization's experiences straightforwardly and honestly in the clear, powerful and revealing light of Scripture.

To Ron Frye, as to others, it seemed incomprehensible to say—after forty years of erroneous predictions based on chronological speculations (some involving measurements from the pyramids of Egypt), and the organization's members being, or becoming, sufficiently "unclean" and apostate that God abandoned them to captivity to Babylon the Great—that these same persons were very quickly thereafter glorified to a new, lofty privilege of service, entrusted with handling all the enlarged interests of the Master, Jesus Christ. As Frye expressed it:

> That's like going to a businessman who, through his own foolishness got himself into financial difficulty and lost a good deal of your money, having to declare bankruptcy, and your then saying to this businessman, "Well done! You lost a small fortune of mine, so now I am going to entrust my whole fortune into your hands."

In essence, this is what it is claimed that Christ did.

33 The *Watchtower*, October 1, 1984, page 24, footnote; *Crisis of Conscience*, page 137. In view of the worldwide campaign built around 1925, he not only made an "ass" of himself but brought worldwide discredit to the entire body of Watch Tower adherents.

What of Today's "Slave Class"?

Passing beyond the situation in Charles Taze Russell's time and the period of 1919 and the early 1920s, what of the *now-existing circumstances* of what the Watch Tower depicts as the "slave class"? This, after all, is all that most of Jehovah's Witnesses today are familiar with, all they have ever known.

The understanding of Jehovah's Witnesses has long been that all the individuals (the 8,600 "anointed) making up the composite "slave" share in the parabolic food-dispensing. Also that as a collective body they have now been placed over the master's belongings,' to administer his earthly interests.[34]

How true is this picture of *all* these "anointed" members sharing in the "feeding work," and today sharing in supervising all the "master's belongings"? We need first to ask how the organization itself presents this "feeding" work and its own statements as to what the spiritual "food" dispensed is.

There is not the slightest question that in the minds of Jehovah's Witnesses as a whole the "food at the due time" provided by the "slave" is the information supplied by the Brooklyn-centered Watch Tower organization, contained in its publications and directives. That understanding has been consistently developed in them by article after article over a period of many years. Typical is the statement in the February 1, 1952, *Watchtower*, which, in discussing how Witnesses should react toward what they read in Watch Tower publications, says (pages 79, 80):

> . . . let us not try to take over the slave's duties. We should eat and digest and assimilate what is set before us, without shying away from parts of the food because it may not suit the fancy of our mental taste. The truths we are to publish are the ones provided through the discreet-slave organization, not some personal opinions contrary to what the slave has provided as timely food.

Over 30 years later, the January 1, 1986, issue of the *Watchtower*, makes this same application and clearly shows the official view that the "food" provided by the "slave class" is to be found

34 The 1983 book *United in Worship of the Only True God*, page 120, says with regard to persons entering the organization: "These, too, would need spiritual food and it would be served to them by the composite 'slave,' Christ's spirit-anointed servants. To please Jehovah, we need to accept the instruction he provides through this channel and act in full harmony with it." Similarly the book *God's Kingdom of a Thousand, Years Has Approached* page 343, in speaking of the entry of Gentile believers into the early Christian congregation, says: "After these became spiritual `domestics,' they also had to join in the feeding work."

in the publications of the Watch Tower. After describing plans and projects for constructing large buildings and printing facilities in various countries, including a proposed 35-story, high-rise building in Brooklyn, the article states (page 25):

> Is all this construction and organizing really necessary? It is, if "the faithful and discreet slave" is to continue providing spiritual "food at the proper time." Such food is vitally necessary for the growth of "the household of God" and for global preaching in upwards of 200 languages.

The "food," then, is obviously presented as meaning the printed information published by and through the Brooklyn-based Watch Tower Society. This raises questions.

Since the "slave" is said to be made up of the "anointed" Christians, many of Jehovah's Witnesses are puzzled as to how this "food-supplying" by them works out in actual practice. I myself from an early point on could not understand just how it was that these "anointed" ones (at least if located outside of the Brooklyn headquarters) in any way shared in the development and supplying of the spiritual "food" presented. My father had been baptized in 1913 and professed to be of the "anointed," as did my mother and others I knew. Yet the new ideas and teachings that were periodically published (replacing previous teachings) came as much as a surprise to them as to me and to others who did not profess to be of that number.[35]

To say, as some did, that the "anointed" in general shared in the parabolic "food" distribution simply 'by accepting these teachings as they came out and by talking about them to others,' seemed an artificial explanation, since those who were not of the "anointed" did exactly the same thing.

For those Witnesses who have no concept of the way the organization's international headquarters functions, there no doubt exists some vague idea that the thinking, Scriptural research, and conclusions of these 8,600 "anointed" ones somehow, in some manner, eventually find their way to the Brooklyn headquarters and gain the attention of the Governing Body, which is stated to be the "spokesman" for the "faithful and discreet slave class," as also its administrative section. Since the organization's doctrine-development process is very private, this allows for considerable conjecture on the part of those trying to grasp the mystery of the relationship between the 8,600 and the Brooklyn headquarters. (Some have even thought that periodic surveys are taken to learn the views of the "anointed" earthwide.)

35 It was not until 1945, when I was 23, that I believed that the heavenly hope presented in Scripture applied to me.

The mist clears the closer one comes to the center of the organization. The idea that a collective body of 8,600 "anointed" ones supplies the spiritual "food" and as a body shares in exercising direction over the interests and affairs of the Master's household, proves to be wholly theory, not in any sense reality. It is perhaps the most obvious fiction found in the whole range of published explanations of Scripture produced by the organization. The fact is that not even 1 percent of that number of "anointed" ones have the slightest part in determining what Jehovah's Witnesses receive in the way of Biblical material or in the forming of policy or the directing of the activities of that people.

Who Actually Supplies the "Food"?

I had partially begun to sense this after attending the Watch Tower's School of Gilead in 1944 and thereafter serving in administrative positions in the Caribbean. My personal contact and communication with the President's Office left little room for doubt as to who decided what the congregations earthwide should read and study and how the proclamation of the good news was to be carried out. It was clearly not any persons outside of the Brooklyn headquarters.

This was confirmed with greater definiteness when, in 1965, after being asked by the president (Nathan Knorr) to go to Brooklyn, I was assigned to be part of the Writing Department. Aside from myself, and not including the vice president, Fred Franz (nominally a part of the Writing Department but actually separate from and superior thereto), there was at that time only one other Writing Department member professing to be of the "anointed," Karl Klein.[36] The other six or so writers were all of those called "other sheep," not viewed as anointed to heavenly life but having earthly hopes, hence not of the "faithful and discreet slave class." By far the majority of the articles published in the magazine were written by persons not of the "anointed class."

There were, of course, articles that did come through from "anointed" brothers in different countries.[37] These, however, were subject to review, revision, and even total rewriting according to the

36 Though a "senior member" of the writing department as to actual years working there, Klein was never assigned to write any of the material deemed especially important, though this was not due to any particular bias against him but mainly because his writing frequently showed a certain instability of argumentation, logic or judgment.

37 In almost all cases the article came because President Knorr had sent an assignment to the person to write it.

discretion of the Writing Department overseer, Karl Adams. Yet Karl himself was not of the "anointed." He felt no hesitance in turning over an article written by one of the "anointed" to one of the "other sheep" for reworking or rewriting, and frequently did so. No one of his superiors had any objection to his doing so.

The sole exception to this rule were the writings prepared by the vice president, Fred Franz. As Karl stated to me, Knorr had made clear that the vice president's writings were to be altered only with the vice president's permission.

In one Governing Body meeting when this subject of the preparation of "spiritual food" came up, President Knorr spontaneously acknowledged that the great bulk of the writing was done by those of the "other sheep" class. To anyone working in the Writing Department this was obvious. Though the Writing Department has since been greatly expanded, the situation remains essentially the same.[38]

The reason generally given to explain away this anomaly is that, even though the non-anointed members do the *thinking, development* and *writing* of the material, it is always read and approved by persons of the "anointed" before printing. Evidently this somehow adds an anointed touch or quality to the material.[39] The very fact that such reasoning must be resorted to of itself shows the strained nature of the claim made as to the application of the food-supplying aspect of Jesus' parable.

Occasionally letters that contained some Scriptural thought or raised certain questions on doctrinal points came in to the Writing Department from persons of the "anointed" class.[40] These letters were handled and are still handled by those assigned to "correspondence desks." Those doing this work were, in the main, men not claiming to be of the "anointed" class (men such as Fred Rusk, Gene Smalley, Russell Dixon, Raymond Richardson). These men routinely read such letters, answer them, and the letter goes no farther. Only if there was something exceptional that the man on the correspondence desk felt was outside his purview would the letter ever find its way on to one of the Governing Body committees. Exactly the same thing was true, however, of letters coming from those not of the "anointed" class. The fact that a letter was from one of the "anointed" rarely if ever caused it to receive any different

38 The writing staff in recent years has numbered 20 or more persons in all, the great majority professing to be of the "other sheep."

39 Compare Haggai 2:11, 12.37

40 Generally this could be known only if the person writing specifically mentioned being of the "anointed."

treatment or any greater consideration whatsoever than a letter would receive from one not professing to be of that class. This practice was not a product of the thinking of the men on the correspondence desks; it was the standard organizational procedure.

What might gain more attention for the letter would be the *organizational position* held by the writer thereof, and this would be irrespective of his professing or not professing to be of the "anointed." Thus, a letter from a district overseer or from a Branch Committee member would almost automatically be given special attention though the writer was not of the "anointed." Such letter would be much more likely to reach a Governing Body committee than a letter from one professing to be of the "anointed" but holding no position beyond that of elder. I know this, not solely from being fifteen years in the Writing Department, but also from serving for nine years on the Writing Committee of the Governing Body and seeing the flow of items brought to our attention from both the headquarters Writing Department and the Service Department, as well as from the ninety or more branch offices around the world. I can state without hesitation that in the headquarters and on the Governing Body no particular concern was expressed, or inquiry made, as to the communication's source being or not being of the "anointed." It was seldom even known. That was simply not treated as a relevant or significant factor.

Input from the Field

In 1976, after the reorganization of the then-existing headquarters administration, three separate series of meetings were held in Brooklyn with groups of men invited in from "the field" to offer expressions on a wide range of subjects relating to the spiritual feeding and activity of the Witnesses. The groups, each of about one hundred men, were composed respectively of representatives from branch offices, then traveling overseers from throughout the United States, and finally a group of selected congregational elders, also from the United States. In inviting them to these exceptional gatherings, no consideration, preference, or, for that matter, even any thought, was given toward selecting men professing to be of the "anointed." Governing Body members and others conducting the discussions generally had no knowledge of who was or who was not of the "anointed" (very, very few were). That simply was not treated as a factor of any importance.

Each year, through its Service Committee, the Governing Body plans and arranges "zone visits" in which Governing Body members and certain others individually travel to various countries and make official visits

to branch offices. Each branch office around the world is to be served annually in this way. The program for such visits is revealing.

As a Governing Body member, when conducting such a zone visit, I was expected to talk to, and hear from, a number of persons. In some countries the number of Witnesses might run into the tens of thousands. So, as "zone overseer," who were those I was to focus on and listen to? In most circumstances, each day I would meet with the branch Bethel family (the staff of the branch operation) for the morning text discussion. I received a "table listing" of all members of the branch staff and each morning certain of these were assigned to make comments on the daily Bible text. In all this, however, no special attention was shown for those who might be of the "anointed," hence members of the "faithful and discreet slave class." If any of the staff or among those assigned to comment were of the "anointed" this generally became known to me only incidentally, usually if someone in chance conversation happened to mention it. No information was supplied identifying such ones and no provision was made for special discussion with anyone because of that person's being of the "anointed."

During the visit, the program called for meeting with those having "missionary status" at a special meal and before the meal I was to speak to these. Again, no special provision was made for any missionaries professing to be of the "anointed" to talk with me.

At another meeting I was to talk with one or two traveling overseers (circuit or district overseers), selected by the Branch Committee. Rarely were any of these men of the "anointed."

The major meeting of the visit was that held with the Branch Committee itself (composed of anywhere from three to seven men) and, again, in most countries that committee was formed entirely of men not of the "anointed."

Aside from a talk that might or might not be arranged for attendance by a general audience of Witnesses, there was no other program for meeting or communication. As Governing Body member Milton Henschel regularly stressed, the zone visit was primarily to check on the functions of the branch office. The nature of the visit was of a business kind, basically organizational, administrative and the work of the staff and the Branch Committee received most of the time and the attention of the visiting representative of the Governing Body. Any expression of interest in the thoughts, Scriptural views or concerns of the "anointed" was simply not part of the agenda.

If the great emphasis placed, in published statements in the *Watchtower* and other sources, on a "faithful and discreet slave"

class (composed today of 8,600 persons) to whom the reigning King Christ Jesus has entrusted the oversight of all his belongings—if that great emphasis were indeed *genuine* and *meaningful*, certainly the "zone visit" to every country would have as a prime feature a meeting of the visiting Governing Body member with these "anointed" ones of the collective "slave" class. The Governing Body is said to act as spokesman for all these anointed ones and a spokesman is beholden to the larger body of persons whom he represents—not the reverse as the Watch Tower Society has it. How can the Governing Body speak for the body of "anointed" ones unless it knows accurately what they are thinking? One would expect the Governing Body to be keenly and intensely interested in their thoughts on any and all spiritual matters, on teachings and on the way the preaching activity is carried on. But what do we find? Provision is made for the visiting Governing Body member to talk with Branch Committee members, branch staff members, traveling overseers and missionaries (often given financial help for traveling to the location for their meeting), *but no provision is made for communication with the "anointed" members of the "faithful and discreet slave" class*.

If the claimed importance of this class had any true substance, the Governing Body would have lists from each country of those of that "faithful and discreet slave" class the Body is said to represent. Instead, the only lists of names they do have are of those who are members of the organization's corporations (such as the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania), or members of branch office staffs, or of men in traveling overseer positions. Not one's being of the "anointed," but *organizational position* is the factor determining what names are listed, with any happening to be of the "anointed" being placed in among the names of non-anointed persons serving in the same capacity.

When, on a few occasions, the Governing Body decided to select additional members for the Body, these lists were the only ones we had from which to extract names of "anointed" men who might be candidates for Governing Body membership. Yet the names of probably ninety-five percent of the "anointed" are not found on these lists.[41]

Input from "Anointed" at Headquarters

Witnesses are informed that 'the greatest concentration of "anointed" ones in any one place on earth' is to be found at the international headquarters in Brooklyn.[42] That is a fact. But it is one that is

41 Lists in my files from the 1970s contain the names of only about 200 out of some 10,000 "anointed" living at that time, all of those listed being either members of the corporation or those in branch offices and traveling work.

42 See, for example, the *Watchtower* of February 15, 1981, page 19.

completely meaningless as regards the actual direction of the work of Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the world or with regard to the "food" supplied, the Bible explanations and doctrinal information Witnesses receive from the international headquarters.

Any headquarters staff members who are of the "anointed" but who are not privileged to be members of the inner circle of the Governing Body are never—on the basis of their being of the "anointed"—called in to Governing Body meetings to express their views. They are never interviewed on that basis and are rarely talked to on matters of weight. They are as much in the dark as to what goes on in the Governing Body meetings as any 19-year-old boy in the Bethel headquarters family. Yet they are supposedly part of the "faithful and discreet slave" class to which the Master has entrusted all his goods! [43]

When opinions are sought by the Governing Body, they are generally sought from men such as the secretaries in the "Executive Offices," some of whom also serve as secretaries for the individual committees of the Governing Body (and as such are permitted to express themselves in committee meetings, though they do not attend sessions of the full assembly of the Body), or opinions may be solicited from members of Branch Comittees or from the Brooklyn Service Department or similar sources. Yet these are sources composed almost entirely of men not professing to be of the "anointed."

How can this possibly be harmonized with the claims made? If the Governing Body does not pretend to be itself "the faithful and discreet slave," and if the claim is indeed true that it simply acts *on behalf of* the collective number of all "anointed" ones—as their representative and spokesman—how can its members have around them at the Brooklyn headquarters the 'greatest concentration of anointed in any one place on earth' and yet have no provision for consulting these fellow members of the "faithful and discreet slave" class, receiving input from them? The fact is, they simply do not operate that way. They never have.

The exalted role and privilege of the approximately 8,600 "anointed" as depicted in the published teaching is, as stated, both theoretical and fictional, not real, not of substance. In the end, the great respect and deference, the loyalty and submission which the four-million non-anointed members are called on to give to this

43 A listing in my files from the 1970s shows 24 "anointed" men other than the Governing Body at headquarters. I cannot recall a single one of these ever being invited to express himself to the Governing Body as a whole on any topic during the nine years of my being on the Body.

"faithful and discreet slave" class, actually winds up as the portion of a small group of men, the dozen or so men forming the Governing Body. If one is in any other position—congregation elder, circuit or district overseer, missionary, branch office staff member, Branch Committee member, or international headquarters staff member—his being of the "anointed," a member of the "faithful and discreet slave" class, will not cause his thoughts to be shown any greater consideration, or grant him any greater voice in what is published or done, than would be the case with any of his non-anointed peers.

If it were possible to bring together all of the 8,600 members of the "anointed" ones, or even a majority of them, so that the question could be put, "What does the 'faithful and discreet slave' believe and teach on such and such a point?" there is not the slightest doubt that the response of virtually all would be to quote from the Watch Tower publications or refer to these as the source of an authentic answer. That response would not be truly their own, it would simply be repeating, echoing what they have been told, since they themselves had nothing to do with the development or presentation of that answer, in any part of the publication process. Even though representing a great majority of the so-called "slave class," they could not speak for themselves as such a class, could do no more than quote what they are given. They would feel afraid to do otherwise.

In reality, there is only *one* distinguishing thing about such "anointed" ones and that is that once a year they partake of bread and wine while others around them abstain. The rest of the year their being part of the "slave class" has no genuine significance. Only when it comes to being a member of the Governing Body does one's being of the "anointed" become a decisive factor, since being such is a requirement for membership therein. If the person is outside that small, powerful administrative group, he will find that his profession of being "anointed" is simply not a factor as to what he does, what voice he has in matters, what consideration is given to his views, or what assignments he receives from the organization. The 8,600 "anointed" ones who are not of the Governing Body know that this is the reality. The current Governing Body members know it also, but evidently give it little thought.

Without frankly or openly acknowledging the true situation, the article in the March 1, 1981 *Watchtower* mentioned earlier makes an apparent effort at justifying the existing situation found in the Watch Tower organization, wherein a tiny fraction of the "slave

class" exercises complete authority over the kind of spiritual "food" that is prepared and served and the direction of the activity and practices of all Jehovah's Witnesses, with the vast majority of the "anointed" who are not part of the authority group having no voice whatsoever in the matter, and being themselves expected to submissively accept whatever the small authority group gives to them. After quoting the familiar text in Isaiah 43:10-12, in which Jehovah refers to Israel as both "my servant" and "my witnesses," the article makes a somewhat subtle effort to justify this situation by saying (page 25):

> **Even though not every individual shared in administrating the nation's affairs, all individuals made up the one people, God's servant. Only a few shared in writing or copying the Holy Scriptures, yet the apostle Paul could say of the people of Israel: "They were entrusted with the sacred pronouncements of God." (Rom. 3:1, 2)**

The examples here chosen, however, actually serve only to confuse and blur the issue. Jehovah spoke of Israel as his "servant" and his "witnesses," not as his "administrators" or "inspired writers." They were *all* to serve, *each individual.* They were *all* to be witnesses by *personally* putting their faith and trust in Him and thereby testifying to his Godship. Administration and inspired writing were not at issue. The Christian congregation was not modeled on the nation of Israel with an earthly administration by a king and his officials. It has only one heavenly King and Administrator, Christ Jesus, the Head of each Christian man and woman.[44] And the inspired writings of the Scriptures have been completed, with no provision for their continuance by any in post-apostolic times. So these factors have no true parallel for Christians in our time. And they certainly supply no justification for using Jesus' parable regarding the faithful steward to uphold as rightful the authority of a small group of persons to control and dictate what other members shall receive as to their understanding of God's Word and the application thereof.

There is a clear inconsistency in this use of the parable. When interpreting many of the other parables of Jesus, the Watch Tower Society's publications regularly acknowledge the fact that the particular action or activity depicted applies to *all* anointed Christians, being carried out by *each of them* in a figurative way. Thus, if the parable speaks of fishermen using a dragnet, it is acknowledged that *all* anointed Christians do a 'fishing work,' not just some of

44 1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22, 23.

them. (Matthew 13:47-50) If the parable deals with attenders at a wedding meal, it is said that, although some may be discovered to be unworthy attenders, *all* anointed Christians are figuratively in attendance, not just a few of them. (Luke 14:16-24) If the parable deals with servants being entrusted with valuables of their master, with which they are to produce increase, even though the "quantity" may vary (in accord with the parable's presentation), nonetheless *all* anointed Christians are viewed as receiving valuables with which to work for increase, none exempted. (Luke 19:11-27; Matthew 25:14-30) If the parable deals with wise virgins who keep their lamps lit in expectation of the master's arrival, this is presented as indicating that anointed Christians should continue alert, and maintain their supply of the "oil" of the holy Spirit so as to continue as light-bearers. (Matthew 25:1-10) Christ clearly intended his parables to be taken to heart by each person and applied in a personal way. But when it comes to the "faithful and discreet slave" the Watch Tower organization makes the clear implication that only *some* of the "slave class" may actually do the real food preparing and supplying, that only *some* may do the actual administering of the master's earthly interests.

There is a brief attempt made in the article to show that all of the "anointed" members do indeed share in the fulfillment of the faithful steward figure and his feeding work. Thus, on page 26, the article in the March 1, 1981 referred to says:

> While alive on earth, Jesus' faithful apostles were especially responsible for providing spiritual teaching for the "household of God." Appointed 'shepherds' of the "flock," as well as others, also had similar responsibility. However, the apostle Peter shows that such stewardship of divine truths actually was committed to *all* the 'chosen ones.' Hence, each respective member of the congregation made a contribution to the building up of the body. (Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Pet. 1:1, 2; 4:10, 11; 5:1-3) Thus we see a clear Scriptural basis for saying that all anointed followers of Christ Jesus make up God's "servant," with Jesus as its Master. Accordingly, that servant, or "slave," as a collective body provides spiritual food for all the individuals of this congregation, which make up the household of "domestics." These individually benefit as recipients of that food. —1 Cor. 12:12, 19-27; Heb. 3:5, 6; 5:11-14.

It is Scripturally true that all Christians share in 'building up the body' of Christ's believers as this paragraph demonstrates. The question is, how do all those of the 8,600 "anointed" who are *not part of the authority structure* share in fulfilling the picture of the

"faithful slave" *in the way all other publications of the Watch Tower Society present it?* To briefly say that "each respective member" makes "a contribution to the building up of the body" does not answer the question. If all the "anointed" are part of the "slave class" and the remaining 4,000,000 of Jehovah's Witnesses are not, how is the "contribution" of the vast majority of the "anointed" any *different* from those of the "non-anointed" class? Do not all Witnesses make some kind of "contribution" to the "building up" of the Witness community—including the building up of those of the "anointed" within it? What, then, is *distinctive* about the "contribution" of these "anointed" outside the authority structure that causes the parable to be fulfilled *in them* but *not* in the "non-anointed" Witnesses?

As has been shown, when it comes to the parable of the faithful steward and his providing of "food at the right time," the feeding is consistently related to the information *received through the "channel" of the central organization*. Beyond denial, in the minds of Jehovah's Witnesses this "food" is one thing only: the teaching supplied by and through the publications of the Watch Tower Society, emanating from its international headquarters, a viewpoint that has been carefully nurtured in them by the organization. When Witnesses speak of something coming from the "faithful slave" they mean that *it originates with and comes from the Brooklyn headquarters*. Anything from any other source does not qualify. As has been clearly demonstrated, only a tiny fraction of the 8,600 "anointed" have anything whatsoever to do with the information thus supplied. Only a tiny fraction also exercise the supervision supposedly entrusted in fulfillment of the slave's being placed 'over all his master's goods.' The paragraph quoted simply never addresses these realities or the existing disparity.

Masking Over Reality—For What Purpose?

What, then, does the fictional teaching about a worldwide administrative and spiritual-food-supplying slave "class" accomplish? It provides a prime basis on which the organization's authority rests, by which a small group of men, whose number represents *only one seventh of one percent* (0.0014) of the 8,600 "anointed," assumes the right to determine not only what all the "anointed," but in fact all Witnesses, will read, study, believe and practice. By its stress on a "class" it also serves to robe the real authority structure with a shroud of anonymity, giving the appearance of a wide diversity of membership and globality that is 'not of whole cloth,' simply not true. This fictional concept enables the real authority structure—the dozen or so members of the Governing Body—to ask for almost

total obedience to their own directives without appearing as arrogant or self-serving. If, for example, they were to say, "Any person engaged in a type of employment that we twelve men here in Brooklyn have decided is wrong, must either quit or be disfellowshiped," the focus would be on them and the tremendous power they exert over the lives of the individual members of the worldwide community of Witnesses. By speaking of the "faithful and discreet slave class," attention is diverted from the small power group as the true authority structure. As "the slave class" that authority source takes on a certain vagueness, an amorphous quality and an extensiveness belonging to an essentially faceless aggregation that is not definable or identifiable in any real sense for the average member. The euphemistic use of the expression and, surprisingly, *their own belief in the concept*, also enables the Governing Body members to publish statements calling for almost total submission to their decisions without being troubled personally by a sense of arrogance.

The Watch Tower's multifaceted claims regarding a "slave class" formed of a collective body of "anointed" ones prove, one after the other, to be unsupportable, even fictional. What message, then, does this parable of the Master genuinely bring to us?

Christian Stewardship

> In proportion as each one has received a gift, use it in ministering to one another as fine stewards of God's undeserved kindness expressed in various ways.—1 Peter 4:10.

The greatest objection to the Watch Tower Society's heavy and constant emphasis on an *organizational* "slave" as fulfilling Christ's parable, is that it robs the parable of much of its force. The real lesson is lost and the parable serves the principal purpose of a prop, supporting an exercise of religious authority by the small group of men forming the Governing Body.

There is nothing wrong of itself with describing as a "class" those Christians who fulfill in their lives the things taught in Jesus' parable of the faithful and discreet slave. A "class" can refer to a number of persons who have similar characteristics, who share similar qualities, or hold certain principles in common, or who engage in a similar course in life. But this does not require that they form part of, or be tied in with, some system or structured group.

They are of that "class" because of what they are as *persons*, not because of what they *belong to* or *hold membership in* with regard to some organization. The term, for example, is often used to refer to persons who share the same economic or social status (the "wealthy class" or the "educated class" or the "underprivileged class," and so forth) without regard for any organizational affiliation they may or may not have. In this sense all Christians are of the same "class." They should all share certain identifying characteristics, hold beliefs and principles in common, follow a similar course in their walk in life, be subject to the same headship. Persons who manifest the same qualities often associate together, drawn to one another because of a common viewpoint and belief and hope or because of mutual standards. Christians similarly should feel drawn to one another for these reasons, and because of mutual love. But the fact remains that it is because they have those qualities *as individuals* that their likeness and their affinity exist, *not* because of their being members of some visible organization, an institutionalized association. The "body of Christ," to which "class" all anointed Christians belong, is a *spiritual* body, its members not identified by earthly organizational membership.

The Watch Tower organization uses the term "class" in a very different way. It sets aside the normal sense of the term and gives it its own special meaning. It states that the designation of the "slave class" applies to persons only as they form part of an *organization-connected* class and therefore the designation does not and cannot have an individual application to anyone not affiliated with that particular visible organization. No matter what Christian characteristics, beliefs, qualities and course of life a person manifests, these are not determinative in identifying him or her as of the "slave class." Connection with the Watch Tower organization is an indispensable requirement. Without that all other factors lose their force in identifying one as of the "faithful and discreet slave" class. Thus the organization sets, not only its own definition of the "class," but also its own parameters determining who can qualify to be within the "class" and who remains outside.

One particularly damaging feature of heavy emphasis on a "class" is its influencing people to think in terms of fulfilling what is taught in the parable through *group membership*, rather than being concerned to demonstrate *personally* the particular Christian qualities set out therein, including faith, discretion, a sense of individual responsibility, watchfulness or any of the other qualities that Jesus' parables fre-

quently stress. The restricting of the parable's application to 8,600 persons and eliminating its application as regards millions of other members not of their "class," compounds the damage done.

The organization's presenting one view in theory, while following another policy *in practice* (whereby the Governing Body to all intents and purposes becomes the "steward" having charge over all Christ's earthly interests) results in the parable's purpose being perverted. Rather than its serving as an exhortation to modest, faithful service to one's Master and one's fellow servants, it is used principally as a means to demand unquestioning submission to the Governing Body's direction.

Illustrating this, in one Governing Body meeting, Grant Suiter quoted a Watch Tower missionary as having said to him, "There is a faithful and discreet slave. Once we find out who he is, from then on it is simple: If he is wrong, he is responsible to God."[45] Governing Body member Suiter manifested obvious approval of this attitude. Yet the idea that some collective group, through its leadership, can bear the responsibility for what we as individuals do—simply because we unquestioningly follow their directions—is totally false and contrary to what the Scriptures teach. It is the same philosophy that enables men to commit acts that are contrary to what is true or right, and perhaps contrary to their conscience, and then seek to excuse themselves of responsibility by saying that their political or military or commercial leaders told them to do so. The Scriptures are clear that when we stand before the judgment seat of God and Christ we stand as *individuals* and as *individuals* answer for what we have done.[46]

When this general subject surfaced in one Governing Body session, I raised the question of the validity of insisting on restricting the application of Jesus' parables to "classes" (in the way the organization uses the term). If this was right, then such application should be consistent, not arbitrary. Did we say, then, that there is a "ten-mina-*class*" and a "five-mina-*class*" in applying the parable found at Luke 19:12-27? If so, who were, or are, they? Surely that identification would have to be determined, not on a *group* basis, but on an *individual* basis, and in reality only Christ could make such an identification. The same might be said regarding Luke 12:47, 48, in which Jesus says:

> Then that slave that understood the will of his master but did not get ready or do in line with his will will be beaten with many

45 He was quoting a Gilead graduate, who, as I recall, was serving in Latin America.
46 Matthew 12:36, 37; Luke 12:48; Romans 14:10-12; 1 Corinthians 4:5; Galatians 6:4, 7, 8.

> strokes. But the one that did not understand and so did things deserving of strokes will be beaten with few.

Were we then to say that there is a "many strokes *class*" and a "few strokes *class*"? If so, who were or are these? Again this would have to be determined, not on a group basis, but on an individual basis, being discernible and determinable only by the Master who can read human hearts and who "will reward *each person* according to what he has done." (Matthew 16:27) Certainly no one can claim that there is, or has been, some specific, identifiable group or "class," joined by organizational ties, membership in which would serve to identify one as part of the "many strokes class" or of the "few strokes class." The Watch Tower Society does not choose to employ their practice of "class" application here, yet this section of Luke is *the same one* in which Luke presents the parable of the "faithful and discreet slave" found in Matthew chapter twenty-four. Surely logic should call for a consistent "class" application.[47]

I brought up these points in the session but there was no response from any of the Governing Body members. As was so often the case, discussion simply shifted to other matters.

Personal, Individual Responsibility

Undeniably, the focus of the Scriptures throughout is strongly on the individual and what he or she does, not primarily on what a "class" does. There is the constant call to apply the teachings of Christ to ourselves in a *personal way*. The Christian career, after all, begins with a personal, individual placing of faith in Christ's ransom sacrifice and a personal, individual offering of oneself in service to God through him. We attain faith on a personal, individual basis, not on a group basis. How can anything change this personal relationship afterward, convert it into something based on, and validated and governed by, an organizational relationship, the result of a "class" membership or affiliation with a "class" in the sense in which the Watch Tower would use the term?

47 The same principle would apply with regard to the "evil slave" of this same parable. The Watch Tower speaks of an "evil slave," yet those persons they label as among such do not all belong to some particular organization, do not form a distinctive composite body. Any individual of the "anointed" who withdrew from the organization and subsequently published information unfavorable to the organization would be classed as an "evil slave" even though he were to act simply as an *individual*. How can this be so in this case and not in the case of one who fits the picture of the *faithful* slave in the same parable?

Judgment by God and Christ, and accompanying reward, is repeatedly said to be, not on the basis of some "class" association or group judgment, but on a strictly individual basis. In the Society's *New World Translation* we read:

> And he will render to each one according to his works: everlasting life to those who are seeking glory and honour and incorruptibleness by endurance in work that is good.
>
> For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God; for it is written: "As I live," says Jehovah, "to me every knee will bend down, and every tongue will make open acknowledgement to God." So, then, each of us will render an account for himself to God.
>
> All the congregations will know that I am he who searches the inmost thoughts and hearts, and I will give to you individually according to your deeds.[48]

Biblical Emphasis on the Individual

It is true that Jesus' parables should apply to his church or congregation in its entirety, and the principles advocated in them should be true of all those genuinely a part of that "body of Christ." But to oppose and argue against an application of this parable to individuals as unworthy of consideration is to argue against what the Scriptures themselves do. They show that, as Christians, *each one of us should strive to prove ourselves to be a faithful steward of the Master.* This is very clear in the parable of the "faithful and discreet slave" itself.

Matthew's account, the one most frequently referred to by the Watch Tower Society, is paralleled by that found in Luke chapter twelve. Luke gives a more specific designation to the "slave." A "slave" (Greek) can be any kind of servant. Luke's account identifies the slave as a "steward" (Greek *oikonomos*). This factor helps throw light on the sense and application of Jesus' parable because of other Scriptural teaching regarding stewardship for Christians.

In reality, according to the context, Jesus' opening question, "Who really is the faithful and discreet slave," is presented, not primarily as focusing on the *identifying* of some person or group, but as introducing a *moral lesson* that focuses on the *conduct* and *course* that demonstrate one to be a faithful and prudent steward of the Master. The *Jerusalem Bible* thus renders his words at Luke 12:42:

> What sort of steward, then, is faithful and wise enough for the master to place him over his household to give them their allowance of food at the proper time?

48 Romans 2:6, 7; 14:11, 12; Revelation 2:23,

Thus, Jesus was essentially saying, 'Who among you disciples will prove himself to be such a faithful and discreet steward?'[49] The answer would depend on what each one *did*, not on what he belonged to or was part of.

Additionally, Luke's account immediately follows this parable with Jesus' words about the slave who understands but does not do, and so receives many strokes, and the one who does not understand and therefore does not do and thus receives few strokes. Jesus, at Luke 12:48, concludes with this application of the lesson:

> Indeed, everyone to whom much was given, much will be demanded of him; and *the one* whom people put in charge of much, they will demand more than usual of him.

Rather than speaking of a group or "class," the *primary* application by Christ himself is to the *individual* Christian, what he does as an *individual* and what he proves himself to be.

Nor is this the only indication. Jesus' inspired apostles likewise discussed faithful stewardship in their writings. We should expect that in doing so they would reflect Jesus' own teaching on the subject. Notably, their discussion is consistently on a personal level with personal application. In his first letter to the congregation in Corinth (4:1, 2), the apostle Paul writes of the service he and his companions rendered, and says:

> Let a man so appraise us as being subordinates of Christ and stewards of sacred secrets of God. Besides, in this case, what is looked for in stewards is for a man to be found faithful.

The identical principle found in Jesus' parable as recorded by Luke, that of proving oneself to be a *faithful steward* of the Lord, is here stated. Paul went on to show that this was not something that humans could determine or render judgment on; they could not make the definitive, determinative, valid identification of who was or was not such a "faithful steward." Paul then shows who could and would, and when and on what basis, saying:

> Now to me it is a very trivial matter that I should be examined by you or by a human tribunal. Even I do not examine myself. For I am not conscious of anything against myself. Yet by this I am not proved righteous, but he that examines me is Jehovah. Hence do not judge anything before the due time, until the Lord comes who will both bring the secret things of darkness to light and make the counsels of the hearts manifest, and then each one will have his praise come to him from God.[50]

49 Compare the quite similar use of "who" in Psalm 15:1-5.
50 1 Corinthians 4:3-5,

Once again, the reference is to the individual, "each one." In their arguments against an application of the parable's fulfillment to individuals (not organizationally linked), the Watch Tower's prime argument is that no individual could live for 1900 years and thus be alive for the return of the Master.[51] It makes no allowance for the fact that a *principle* can be in force for 1900 years and *can apply uniformly to all individuals* whose lifetime comes within that period. It seems also to forget that persons can be resurrected and be judged and rewarded (along with the living) on the basis of what they did during their life course right up to death.[52]

Paul did not live for nineteen hundred years nor did any of his associates and fellow workers. Yet if they individually proved themselves faithful stewards of Christ down to their death, he would reward them at his coming. Wherein does this differ from what Jesus' presents in his parable? Yet Paul speaks of no "class," focusing rather on his own personal case and course as a "steward" and of what "each one" would do and receive. The *Watchtower*'s presentation makes it appear that the Master on his coming only reviews the record of a "remnant" of the "steward class" *then alive on earth*, approving and promoting *them* to "care for all his earthly interests." Paul's words show that this is not the case, that at his coming the Master renders his judgment and gives his reward to *all his servants*, all who have served as "stewards," whether then living or having died in the past.[53]

The apostle's words are also against engaging in self-authentication, self-approval and self-promotion, doing so to establish and maintain a power base, or to elevate oneself—by elevating the particular religious group one is part of—over others who are seeking to demonstrate their faith as Christians. All that any of us can rightly say is that, like Paul, we are *striving* to be faithful stewards and that our true judgment in that regard remains with God and Christ, to be revealed on the day of their making that judgment known.

51 See, for example, the *Watchtower*, October 1, 1981, pages 21, 22.
52 Compare 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18.
53 As the parable of the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16) also indicates, Christ does not reward persons differently on the basis of the *time period* when they engage in his service. In the illustration, those workers who went to work last received the same wage as those who began earlier, so that all were made "equal." He did not give the latecomers less, but neither did he give them *more* than others. The *Watchtower* would make it appear that persons serving in the twentieth century (the "remnant") received a very special reward that none of their predecessors could have received. The book *God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached*, page 354, states that, since Christ in 1919 held a royal capacity "such as he had not possessed when he was down here on earth in the first century," that therefore the "slave class" from 1919 onward come in for a "more important service," "higher honor." That would mean that their service was on a more elevated scale than that of first-century Christians, which would include the apostles themselves!

The same apostle, in writing to Titus in Crete, gave counsel regarding elders, among other things saying:

> For an overseer must be free from accusation as God's steward, not self-willed, not prone to wrath, not a drunken brawler, not a smiter, not greedy of dishonest gain.[54]

Each elder should *individually* measure up to these qualifications for being a "steward" of God. Assessment of these men would logically be on that basis, not as part of some "elder class" or distinctively organized group. Any individual Christian man who acted like the violent, arrogant, drunken steward of the latter part of Jesus' parable would be unsuitable, rejected. It was up to each one *personally* to show what he was. He was also to hold "firmly to the faithful word as respects his art of teaching," which implies his own faithfulness as a steward in adhering to God's Word, as well as discretion in his teaching.[55] Again, we find a precise parallel with the elements in Jesus' parable of the faithful and discreet steward and the wicked, drunken steward. Yet the application is clearly on an *individual* basis.

While individual application is thus made by Paul to himself and his associate workers and to individual elders, what of the rest of the Christians, all the others who make up what the apostle calls "God's household"?[56] Can they all be "stewards"? And can they be so on an individual basis or must it be a case of membership in some organization-oriented steward "class"? What of all the *women* who are equally part of that household—do they have a stewardship? And if all are stewards, how could there be any "domestics" to whom to minister as stewards? What do the Scriptures themselves say?

The apostle Peter makes this relevant statement in his first letter, as recorded in chapter four, verses 10 and 11:

> In proportion as each one has received a gift, use it in ministering to one another as fine stewards of God's undeserved kindness expressed in various ways. If anyone speaks, let him speak as it were the sacred pronouncements of God; if anyone ministers, let him minister as dependent on the strength that God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

54 Titus 1:7, *NW*.
55 Titus 1:9.
56 1 Timothy 3:15.

Peter is clearly not talking in terms of some conglomerate, some "composite" steward, but instead is laying stress on individuals and their personal stewardship. He makes plain that *each Christian* has some particular gift from God that he or she can use in rendering service to fellow servants in God's household. This is so because God's grace or undeserved kindness is expressed "in various ways," even as other scriptures stress.[57] Not everyone has the same gift. Hence, whatever it is that they have, they can use it to the benefit of others, who in turn use what *they* have for the good of others, including those benefiting them. In doing so, they do not become self-important, arrogant, domineering toward others. They faithfully and discreetly use their divine grant of undeserved kindness to the honor of God, as dependent on Him, speaking not their own theories or some organizational dogma, but "the sacred pronouncements of God," His unadulterated Word.

Peter's presentation certainly is in perfect parallel with Jesus' parable of the slave or steward who faithfully ministers to fellow servants in his master's household. It also clearly stresses the personal responsibility of each Christian and his or her personal accountability to God and Christ to demonstrate faithfulness and discretion in using on behalf of fellow servants whatever helpful gift he or she has received. Down through the past nineteen centuries of time there have surely been many individual men and women who have been faithful and discreet stewards of their Christian gift and who will be found approved by the Master at his arrival, though needing a personal resurrection (not a "class" resurrection) from the dead to receive their reward. There is nothing, not the slightest bit of evidence to show that such ones of past centuries did this as an amalgamation, being all joined by organizational or "class" ties. Though like wheat found among weeds, the principle stated at 2 Timothy 2:19 has always applied, namely that "the Lord knows those who are his."

Much of the misconception results from attaching arbitrary meanings to the parabolic "feeding" done by the steward and his being "appointed over all his master's goods." In Watch Tower publications the "feeding" is made to stand for producing literature through a publishing agency. It is highly unlikely that Jesus would use any figurative action as designed to represent such activity. By providing food allotments regularly to fellow servants, the steward was *caring for their needs.* In our spiritual lives we can be "fed" in many, many ways. Our faith is fed not only by words, but by example, by kindness and per-

57 Compare 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; Romans 12:6-8.

sonal interest shown, by encouragement given, by acts of love. All such things nourish us, build us up for further service to our Master. The words of Peter, quoted earlier, demonstrate this, showing we are all to be stewards of God's undeserved kindness, "expressed in various ways." The "grace of God in its varied forms" (*New English Bible* rendering) which we each are privileged to dispense is surely not limited just to supplying some type of published information. It covers the whole range of His goodness and gifts.

So, too, with the *reward* granted the faithful steward. What basis is there for claiming that Christians on earth are to be promoted to form some type of managerial body or composite vicegerent (an administrative deputy) with authority over all Christ's interests on the planet? The Scriptures as a whole testify to the fact that it is only at the final judgment that God's reward is given, not before. That final judgment is still ahead of us. If this were not the case, then we should consistently hold that certain of the Master's servants should right now be exercising power comparable to authority "over ten cities" or "over five cities" in fulfillment of the parable of the pounds (or minas).[58] This parable follows the *very same pattern or formula* of the parable of the faithful and discreet slave—a master departs, having left a servant or servants with specific assignments, then, upon his return, he assesses their faithfulness in carrying out their charge and rewards them accordingly. Reasonably, both parables should correspond as to what takes place *when the man returns*. Yet the Watch Tower organization explains the parable of the pounds or minas in a completely different manner from the parable of the faithful and discreet slave. In their explanation of the parable of the faithful steward the Master, Christ, returns in 1914 and in 1919 *approves the steward and rewards him with promotion* to authority over all his belongings. By contrast, in its explanation of the parable of the pounds, the *Watchtower* of December 1, 1973 (page 719), states that—contrary to Jesus' own presentation of the parable—at his return (in 1914) the Master does not reward his faithful servants with their 'rulership' over 5 and 10 cities, but instead, five years later, proceeds to give them an extension of time to do business with his talents! The *Watchtower* informs us that "what occurred was like a "new committal of the symbolic silver minas in the year 1919 to the anointed remnant of Jehovah's Christian witnesses" and that they set themselves "a new to doing business or trading with the symbolic silver minas freshly

58 Luke 19:15-19.

received from the Lord Jesus Christ now clothed with kingly power." The book *God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached* (pages 230 to 232) similarly rewrites the related parable of the talents, stating that the Master on his return found that, in 1919, he had to give his servants "new and further opportunity to 'do business' with his precious 'talents.'" Not one word or indication is found in the Scriptures about a *second* assigning of pounds (or of talents) for trading *after the master returns*. This simply illustrates that the Watch Tower understanding is based solely on an accommodation to their own organizational circumstances and claims and if the scriptural account must be "adjusted" or added to in order to accomplish this, they feel justified in doing so. The same is true with the parable of the faithful and discreet slave.[59]

When it deals with the parable of the pounds (minas) the *Watchtower* makes no attempt to assign the giving of the Master's reward as taking place in 1919 or at any time since; so, too, with the book *God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached* and its explanation of the related parable of the talents. In both cases they acknowledge that the reward is conferred at the final judgment when faithful Christians will "reign with Christ above," with those who had died being resurrected, and those still living experiencing "instantaneous change from corruption to incorruption."[60] What possible justification is there for the arbitrary and unequal application made of the conferring of the reward in the parable of the faithful steward as compared with the parable of the pounds and that of the talents?

In the parables of the faithful steward and that of the pounds the reward undoubtedly refers to the same thing. In the one parable the man possesses a household property and its belongings; in the other the man has control over a number of cities (evidently 15). In each case, the man rewards faithfulness in his service by a grant of authority over his domain. There is every reason to be-

59 How else can one explain that Christ returns in 1914 but delays his inspection of his servants until five years later in 1919? What is he supposed to have been doing during those five years? And where is there anything in Scripture to indicate he would put off his taking account of his servants in that manner? Obviously, there is nothing at all to show this. But it must be that way. Why? Because that explanation fits and makes use of certain facets of the organization's history. If the imprisonment of Watch Tower officials and their release had occurred in 1916 or some other date, then the interpretation would coincide with that date and that date would be the time of Christ's inspection. What the organization does or what happens to it determines what the scripture's fulfillment is and, in effect, what the Master's schedule is.

60 The *Watchtower*, December 1, 1973, page 719; *God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached*, pages 242-247.

lieve that this simply presents in allegorical form Jesus' promise that, "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne."[61] For their faithfulness such ones join their Master in his heavenly throne as joint heirs with him in his Father's kingdom.[62]

The Unfaithful Slave

What then of the picture found in the same parable of the slave who, instead of proving faithful and discreet, proves himself unfaithful? We read:

> But if that slave should say in his heart, "My master is delaying," and should start to beat his fellow slave, and should eat and drink with the confirmed drunkards, the master of that slave will come on a day that he does not expect him and in an hour that he does not know, and will punish him with the greatest severity and will assign him his part with the unfaithful ones.[63]

The Watch Tower organization has applied this to any member who does not accept completely their teachings, including the time prophecies about 1914.[64] Such ones, they say, are viewing the Master's coming as "delayed." If these persons question the Scripturalness of any published interpretation, express any view that differs from what the organization currently teaches, or question the propriety of the formation of an authority structure that attributes to itself the right to formulate at will a host of regulations and rules not found in Scripture, this is classified by the Watch Tower as "beating" their fellow servants.

Though perhaps sounding plausible to some, this is again a case of making Scripture agree with the organization rather than letting it speak for itself. Christ Jesus, the Master of the Christian household, repeatedly emphasized that his return would be unpredictable, unexpected, unannounced, hence with no means for foretelling an imminent return, nothing to alert his servants beforehand to prepare themselves for his arrival. Because of this they would need to be constantly on the watch, whether they lived in the first century, the seventh, the thirteenth or the twentieth. That watchfulness, however, is *not* dependent on belief in some date or an urgency created because of some time frame set forth, within the bounds of which time frame the end can be expected with certainty.

61 Revelation 3:21, *NIV;* Matthew 19:28.
62 Romans 8:17; James 2:5.
63 Matthew 24:48-51, *NW.*
64 Technically the expression "evil slave" is supposed to apply only to "anointed" persons who cease to submit to the authority of the Watch Tower organization, but it is used loosely in criticism of any person who does so, "anointed" or "non-anointed."

Christians in the past stayed alert, watchful, in expectation, without any such humanly devised and interpreted time factors, and Christians today can do the same.[65]

We should ask ourselves: Of the two slaves depicted in the parable, *which one* indicates that he had some preconceived idea of a certain time in which the master should arrive? It was *not* the faithful slave, but *the evil slave*. This latter slave could not have felt that the master was 'delaying' *unless he expected him within a certain time period* . The faithful slave is not represented as having any particular idea of how long his master might be away. He appears as simply serving faithfully without trying to place an estimation of, or limitation on, the length of the period of absence. This is quite different from an organization which for decades claimed as absolute fact that the arrival will come and *must* come within the lifetime of persons born before or on a certain date.

It is true that, along with many other religions, the Watch Tower organization continually speaks of its confidence in the imminence of the Master's return. But it is worth noting that it is not with his *mouth* that the unfaithful slave delays his Lord's coming; it is "in his *heart*." His 'delaying the arrival' was not that of expressing a frank disagreement with some other servant who claimed to know that the arrival was due to take place within a certain time frame (as the Watch Tower organization has done). The slave's *words*, then, are not necessarily what show whether he is inwardly "delaying" the arrival. It is what he *does* and the *way* he does it that reveals that.

According to the parable, this slave begins to act as if *he* now ran the house, as if he himself were the master. His assignment was simply to provide food, doing so punctually at indicated times; but he now arrogates to himself the right to chastise fellow servants. This is quite different from the case of a servant who calls for relief from abuses of authority by a professed superior, as is the situation with many who object to having an organization impose its own rulings on them as inferiors, an organization that asks and even requires them to take its word as if it were the Lord's.

I am sure that there are persons who, on leaving the Watch Tower organization, engage in harsh and abusive speech regarding it, and in equally harsh verbal attacks upon the men directing it. As exemplified in the letters quoted from in the "Foreword" of this book and elsewhere, there are many others who are repelled by such practice—and I would hope these form the majority. On the other hand, it should be evident that simply to express to other persons one's honest and conscientious objections to the decrees and actions of an organization's officials is not in any sense a "beating" of such officials. If

65 For a thorough discussion of this subject see *The Sign of the Last Days—When?* (Commentary Press, 1987) pages 229-236.

that were so then the apostles were "beating" the Sanhedrin in the exposition of facts they publicly made. And today the Watch Tower Society would be guilty of "beating" government rulers or officials when it has publicly made known their unjust treatment and protested their dictatorial acts toward Jehovah's Witnesses in their domain, or when it has born testimony to this before courts, as it has done on numerous occasions.

In the case of the parable, it is evident that someone "blew the whistle" on the arrogant slave so that the master knew what had happened during his absence. It is, then, not a "beating" of a fellow servant if another of the master's servants calls attention to the unfaithful conduct of that particular servant, bears testimony to the wrongness of his acts in dealing with other servants of the household. Instead, if done with a proper motive, it reflects concern for others and their welfare, represents a just and proper effort to bring about a redressing of the wrong, a correcting of an unjust situation.

The "beating" in the parable is very different from this. It is the case of one who has, or *considers* himself as having, a superior position and who uses it in dominating others as inferiors. He acts as if he can do this with impunity, as though there will be no "day of reckoning" for him, no accounting for such superior, cavalier treatment of others, of those whom he was supposed to feed, humbly and faithfully. He acts as if whatever he does, even if wrong (doubtless even a serving of adulterated food), will be excused or overlooked by the master. Such a person, having that view and spirit, would feel that no one should ever register complaint, and that any doing so should be treated as showing disrespect to his appointed authority and hence worthy of punishment, deserving a beating by him. I think that reflection and meditation on this will convince us that there are many examples of this today, and in many religions.

The unfaithful slave is spoken of as eating and drinking with drunkards. In the Bible, drunkenness is often used in a figurative sense, apart from literal intoxication. Some men are literally "drunken brawlers." (1 Timothy 3:3) But one can be figuratively "drunk" in a number of ways. The prophet Isaiah figuratively depicts as 'drunken' religious leaders of ancient Israel, men whom he described as "braggarts," self-confident men who tyrannized over others but who felt secure as to their immunity to any adverse judgment from God.[66]

One can thus become "drunk" with power, with self-importance. Along with literal drunkenness, the unfaithful slave showed himself intoxicated with his own authority by his domineering treatment of those he was supposed to serve. This is a common

66 Isaiah 28:1, 7, 14-19.

failing of those who attain positions of authority and of power. It is a trap that can be avoided only by constant, conscious effort. That is true of individuals. It is also true of organizations.

As has been demonstrated, the problem as a whole lies not so much with the Watch Tower organization's insistence on restricting all application of the parable to a "class." It lies primarily with the way the parable is used—to enforce the control of an authority structure, as a means of intimidation, suppressing any conscientious objection to the dictates and declarations of what amounts to an elite group, as also its use to robe those dictates and declarations with divine force, whether they are in harmony with actual Scriptural statements or not. To use the parable in this manner is to do violence to its basic theme of considerately, humbly, responsibly and faithfully serving the needs of others as fellow servants of one's Master.

The parable should induce serious, heart-searching self-examination. Any self-assured posture, any authoritarian attitude or flaunting of one's claimed superior position, any inclination to take punitive action toward those not conforming to one's own will or viewpoint, is surely an evidence of a "delaying" of the day of accounting in one's own heart. Back in the first century, Diotrephes displayed such an attitude by his actions, domineering over others in the congregation, expelling those whom he viewed as a threat to his authority.[67]

Down through the centuries, many individuals, religious leaders and organizations have exemplified that pattern, insisting that persons line up with their concepts or dogma or else be hit with accusations of spiritual insubordination, willful and egotistical independence, disloyalty to God and Christ, hence needing to be 'thrown out of the household' of God. Religious history is replete with such examples. To follow their course today is, in effect, to fellowship with such men, 'eating and drinking with the drunkards,' those who, like the religious "drunkards" of ancient Israel, are intoxicated with their own importance.

By contrast, others, though themselves wrongly accused and cast out, though scattered about and perhaps limited in fellowship to a few companions, may have nonetheless 'kept their place,' by never losing sight of their personal relationship and accountability to their Master.[68] Within whatever sphere of influence God grants them, however small, they rightly view their "stewardship," not as a power base or as a means of intimidating others, but as an opportunity and obligation to serve others in the spirit of their compassionate Master. In his own time, and on a person-by-person basis, he promises to make evident who got the point of his parable and applied it and who did not.

67 3 John 9-11.
68 Compare Ecclesiastes 8:2-4.

6

Salvation by Faith, Not Works

By this undeserved kindness, indeed, you have been saved through faith; and this is not owing to you, it is God's gift. No, it is not owing to works, in order that no man should have ground for boasting.—Ephesians 2:8, 9.

A CHRISTIAN'S not being under law does not, certainly *should* not, make him lawless. Because of being under God's grace his freedom from subjection to law should result, not in a lack of righteousness, but in a *superior* righteousness, a righteousness from God, based on faith, love and truth, rather than on obedience to a religious code. In the same way, his being saved on the basis of faith rather than works should result, not in inactivity, passivity or apathy, but in *superior* activity, flowing from those same factors.

In both cases, it is the *motivating force* that makes the difference. It is the *spirit* in which things are done that is the key to the superiority found within Christian freedom. It is the difference between doing something with a feeling of compulsion as opposed to doing it spontaneously, an act freely done from the heart. Genuine faith and love must spring from within the individual, and *acts* of faith and love must be motivated from within the heart, not as the result of external pressures. Encouragement, even exhortation, can be a positive, beneficial factor; but pressure to conform to a program of specific activities works against such true motivation.

The more structured and systematized the program and the more external pressure to conform is applied, the less opportunity there is for faith and love to express themselves spontaneously. These opportunities are, in many cases, essentially squeezed out. The quality and nature of the motivation for whatever works and deeds that *do* result must then be subject to question.

What is the situation within the religious organization of Jehovah's Witnesses in this regard? The Watch Tower organization claims belief in the Biblical teaching that we are saved by faith, not by works. But does this hold up in *actual practice*? We have seen the intense emphasis placed on submission to centralized

authority, with loyalty to it and its directives being equated with loyalty to God and Christ. What effect does this have on the way Jehovah's Witnesses as a whole view their service to God, to Christ, and to their fellow man? Is the effect a healthful one or does it ultimately work against the Scriptural principle here discussed?

Throughout most countries Jehovah's Witnesses are known for their intense activity in carrying their message from door to door. Watch Tower publications regularly call attention to the hundreds of millions of hours spent annually in this activity by the worldwide membership, with resulting distribution of hundreds of millions of pieces of literature. The claim is made that they thus excel in exemplifying the activity of Christians of the first century, not only in zeal but in the *method* used—door-to-door visitation—and that this is an evidence that they, out of all those professing Christianity, are the true proclaimers of the good news today.

There is no question as to the *fact* of this activity. The more important question is as to *why* Jehovah's Witnesses as a religious community engage in their public witnessing activity? Is it something that they individually and freely decided to do as the result of a conviction that is truly personal, with love and faith as the motivating force determining *how* and *when* and *to what extent* they engage in this activity? Is the encouragement given them by the organization free from evidence of coercive pressure, whether overt or subtle? Or, instead, are members made to feel that zeal in working in the organizational program will have a determining effect on God's granting them salvation, so that failure to give strong support to the program induces a nagging sense of guilt?

Whatever the case may be as to how genuinely motivated *particular individuals* are within that community—and there are definitely some loving, heart-motivated persons to be found therein—what is the situation as regards *the community as a whole*? What *spirit dominates* and what is the *characteristic sentiment and attitude* developed by the organizational message and directives?

The evidence to answer these questions is supplied from within the organization itself.

Human Standards and Pressure

An illustration of the spirit prevailing within the organization is found in the attitude the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses showed toward certain material originally prepared for inclusion in a Bible commentary on the letter of James.

The commentary had been written principally by Edward Dunlap,

formerly the Registrar of the Watch Tower's missionary school called Gilead, and a major contributor to its Bible dictionary, *Aid to Bible Understanding* (now titled *Insight on the Scriptures*). Ed Dunlap was himself a very active Witness. During the last five or six years of my residing at the Watch Tower's Brooklyn headquarters complex of buildings, I lived in rooms near his, and every Sunday morning, virtually without exception, Ed and his wife could be seen heading out to the subway station to go to the Canarsie congregation to engage in group "field service" with other congregation members. He was in this respect considerably more exemplary than several Governing Body members.

Showing that he did not believe in a passive, apathetic Christianity, Ed Dunlap pointed out in the introduction to the Bible commentary (pages 6, 7) that the disciple James' letter refuted the view that faith and works were, in effect, mutually exclusive, or "that a purely intellectual faith was sufficient for the Christian." In the *Commentary on the Letter of James,* pages 6, 7, he went on to say of those overlooking the value of works:

> This would ignore any need for faith to affect the heart, and would deny that faith had power to move a person to make changes in his personality and his life and to do things for others in a positive expression of that faith. They were, if they maintained this idea, becoming like those of whom Paul speaks as having "a form of godly devotion but proving false to its power."—2 Tim. 3:5.
>
> . . . James was not in any way saying that works of themselves can bring salvation. We cannot properly devise a formula or build a structure through which we can work out our salvation. The faith must be there first. As James clearly emphasized, good works will come spontaneously from the heart, with the right motive of helping people in love and compassion. Jesus' life is an illustration of this. The law that the Christian follows is "the law of a free people," not a law code like the Mosaic law. (Jas. 2:12; Rom. 2:29; 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:6) It is the divine law that is written on the Christian's heart.—Jer. 31:33; Heb. 8:10.1.

It had been very difficult to get the Governing Body as a whole to agree to the Writing Department's recommendation for the preparation of a Bible commentary, not just on the letter of James but *any* commentary. For some reason certain members seemed to view it as a risky undertaking, and voiced strong reservations or negative feelings toward the project.[1] Though eventually approved, published and included in the study program of the

1 Among these were Milton Henschel, Ted Jaracz, Karl Klein and Fred Franz.

organization for a period, this commentary (the only actual Bible commentary the organization ever produced) has since been allowed to go out of print. Something that helps explain why is a decision made with reference to the book in one of the Governing Body sessions.

In the paragraph that follows the points quoted earlier, the book *as originally written* went on to state:

> As James shows, no Christian should judge his brother or set up human standards that he must follow, though he may encourage a brother and incite him to fine works; and he may even reprove his brother where there is definite Scriptural reason and Scriptural proof for what he says. (Jas. 4:11, 12; Gal. 6:1; Heb. 10:24) When the right works are performed they must be carried out at the direction of conscience. The real Christian will not do things by rote, and he does not need a detailed code of rules. Neither does he carry out his good works because of pressure from others. The apostle Paul points out these facts at Romans chapter 14. So if a person has a genuine, living faith, the works will reasonably follow. They will be good works that God will reward, because they are performed out of heart devotion. However, one who tries to gain righteousness through a minutely defined structure of "dos" and "don'ts" will fail. Such "righteousness" is of men and not of God.

This is a photocopy of the way this paragraph (of page 7) was originally approved by the Writing Committee of the Governing Body, sent to the Watch Tower's Brooklyn printing plant, and actually printed up in hundreds of thousands of copies. Yet outside of the Governing Body members and a few other persons, no Witness has seen this wording nor will he find it in the copy of the commentary he possesses. The reason is that due to opposition of certain Governing Body members the paragraph was rewritten and the hundreds of thousands of copies already printed were destroyed—not just hundreds of thousands of individual pages but of sections of 32 pages each.[2] Why? The points they objected to, and ultimately changed, are significant in what they reveal as to the thinking of the men themselves.

Consider this same paragraph as it appears in the commentary as finally published and distributed:

2 Books were printed in 32-page sections called "signatures" which were then bound together to form the book. See also the Appendix with regard to another section portions of which had initiated the discussion leading to the destruction of both these sections.

> As James shows, no Christian should judge his brother or set up human standards for gaining salvation, though he may encourage a brother and incite him to fine works; and he may even reprove his brother where there is definite Scriptural reason and Scriptural proof for what he says. (Jas. 4:11, 12; Gal. 6:1; Heb. 10:24) When the right works are performed they must be carried out in response to direction from God's Word. The real Christian will not do things by rote, and he does not need a detailed code of rules. Neither does he carry out his good works just to please men. So if a person has a genuine, living faith, fine works will reasonably follow, including preaching and teaching the good news of the Kingdom. (Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20) They will be good works that God will reward, because they are performed out of heart devotion. However, one who tries to gain righteousness through a minutely defined structure of "dos" and "don'ts" will fail. Such "righteousness" is of men and not of God.

There is certainly nothing objectionable in itself with this final published form of the paragraph. Most of it is the same as the initial version. In fact, one might wonder why the Governing Body members were sufficiently opposed to the original version to order the destruction of hundreds of thousands of copies of the 32-page section. Yet subtle changes have been made, and these changes are significant, providing insight into the thinking among many Governing Body members. Consider the changes made between the original writing and what was ultimately published:

Original	**Revised**
As James shows, no Christian should judge his brother or set up human standards that he must follow	As James shows, no Christian should judge his brother or set up human standards for gaining salvation . . . .
When the right works are performed they must be carried out at the direction of conscience.	When the right works are performed they must be carried out in response to direction from God's Word.
Neither does he carry out his good works because of pressure from others. The apostle Paul points out these facts at Romans chapter 14. So if a person has a genuine, living faith, the works will reasonably follow.	Neither does he carry out his good works just to please man. So if a person has a genuine, living faith, fine works will reasonably follow, including preaching and teaching the good news of the Kingdom. (Matt. 24:14; 28:19, 20)

The wrongness of a Christian's attempting to "set up human standards [a brother] must follow" has thus been altered to setting up "human standards for gaining salvation"; reference to the role of "conscience" in performing right works has been eliminated, with "direction from God's Word" put in its place; the statement that the Christian does not carry out his good works "because of pressure from others" has been changed to read "just to please men"; and all reference to Romans chapter fourteen has been cut, and reference to "preaching and teaching the good news of the Kingdom" has been inserted in its place, this despite the fact that *in the entire letter of James* the disciple himself *nowhere* discusses such preaching activity, whereas he *does* speak of caring for orphans and widows, of respect for the poor, of caring for needy congregational members, proper treatment of laborers, all in connection with showing what genuine Christian worship is and in illustrating works of true faith, mercy and love.

What does this reveal? It is true that no Christian has the right to set up human standards "for gaining salvation." But why did Governing Body members wish to limit it to this, and why did they object to the initial version which broadened the matter out to *any* human standards set up as something that one's brother "must follow"? The evident reason is that the practice of the organization for decades has been to make up precisely such human standards and insist upon their being adhered to, with failure to conform in many cases calling for disfellowshipment.[3] (And, it may be said, where disfellowshipment is the penalty for noncompliance, in effect the standard set up does become placed as something necessary "for gaining salvation.")

The Christian does indeed perform right works "in response to direction from God's Word," as the revised wording of the commentary reads. But why eliminate "conscience" from the matter, as found in the initial version? In the final analysis does not one's conscience play a vital part in deciding *in what way* one will perform certain works and even in having a *personal conviction* as to the particular works being "right works" and in harmony with God's Word? Why then the change? Because for decades the organization has stressed, not a Christianity reflecting strong personal conviction, but a Christianity distinguished by *organizational conformity*, with the centralized authority determining for its members precisely what the "direction from God's Word" is and what their "response" should be to it. The very exercise of personal conscience is viewed as something needing to be organizationally controlled.

3 For documentation of this, see Chapters 8, 9 and 11.

It is also true that the Christian does not carry out his good works "just to please men." But what is it that usually *causes* one to feel inclined, even feel under compulsion, to please men? Is it not *pressure*, applied in a great variety of ways—peer pressure, pressure based on a reward system, pressure resulting from the fear of being viewed as failing to measure up to stated expectations? Since such pressure is at the root of the problem of 'pleasing men,' why the elimination of the reference to "pressure" in the original version? When this portion was discussed, Governing Body member Jaracz recommended this change, saying that he thought that "pressure can be a good thing." And for decades the organization has applied pressure on its members, pressure to engage in specific organizational activities and to measure up to human standards set by the organization, with little or no consideration as to whether the member's individual *conscience* moves him or her to do so or not. One notable means for exerting such pressure has been the use of a "field service report" slip which each Witness is expected to fill out on a monthly basis (listing activity in door-to-door work and related activities), turned in to the congregation for recording on a "Publisher's Report Card" kept on file for examination by elders and by visiting "circuit overseers."

Is this viewpoint simply that of someone who wishes to avoid performing "right works," who is either lacking in zeal to perform them or is too proud to engage in certain activities stressed by the organization? That is the way the matter is presented in Watch Tower publications. Thus, the 1988 book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax at Hand!*, page 45, speaks of,

> . . . someone [who] criticizes the way Jehovah is having his work done and appeals to a self-sparing spirit by claiming that it is neither Scriptural nor necessary to go from house to house with the Kingdom message. Sharing in such service after the example of Jesus and his apostles would keep these ones humble; yet they prefer to split off and take it easy, perhaps only reading the Bible occasionally as a private group. (Matthew 10:7, 11-13; Acts 5:42; 20:20, 21)

An article in *Awake!* magazine of May 22, 1990, on "Five Common Fallacies" used in argumentation, lists the first as "Attacking the Person." On pages 12 and 13 it says that:

> This type of fallacy attempts to disprove or discredit a perfectly valid argument or statement by making an irrelevant attack on the person presenting it.
>
> . . . How easy it is to label someone "stupid," "crazy," or "uninformed"

> when he or she says something we don't want to hear. A similar tactic is to attack the person with a subtle dose of innuendo. . . .
>
> But while personal attacks, subtle and not so subtle, may intimidate and persuade, never do they disprove what has been said. So be alert to this fallacy!

That fallacious tactic is precisely what the Watch Tower writer used in the portion just quoted from the book on *Revelation*. Indeed, how easy it is to label someone as "critical of the way Jehovah is having his work done" and as appealing to "a self-sparing spirit," as not being "humble" and preferring to "split off and take it easy" if the person presents Scriptural evidence contrary to the Society's claims. It is far easier to make use of labels and innuendo than it is to answer the Scriptural arguments, which are the true issue.

That this disdainful view is false can be seen by another, earlier, example that led to discussion by the Governing Body. It dealt with the means primarily used to ensure that Witnesses regularly spend a portion of their time in distributing the organization's publications from door to door.

Back in 1971 an organizational handbook was being developed, titled *Organization for Kingdom-Preaching and Disciple-Making*. The project was under the direction of Karl Adams, then the overseer of the international headquarters' Writing Department. Unquestionably, in that period he ranked next to Fred Franz in the worldwide organization in being entrusted by President Knorr with responsibility as to what the content of the organization's publications should be. It is true that Fred Franz was, in effect, the only source of "new light" and, except in rare cases of a veto by President Knorr, he was the ultimate arbiter on Scriptural questions. Nonetheless, on a day-to-day basis, and with regard to the bulk of things published, Nathan Knorr *actually relied more on Karl Adams than on Fred Franz*.[4] He placed great trust in Karl's judg-

4 The transcript of the Scotland trial, quoted from in Chapter 3, shows that Fred Franz testified as follows as to how decisions approving "advances" of understanding were then made. To the question, "Are these advances, as you put it, voted upon by the Directors [of the Board of Directors]?" he answered, "No." When asked, "How do they become pronouncements?" he replied, "They go through the editorial committee, and I give my O.K. after Scriptural examination. Then I pass them on to President Knorr, and President Knorr has the final O.K." He was asked, "Does it not go before the Board of Directors at all?" and he replied, "No." This, incidentally, shows the utter falsity of the claim that the Board of Directors then functioned as a "Governing Body" in any genuine sense of the term. In reality, there was no set "editorial committee." But there were three persons whose signatures were required on all material for publication: those of Nathan Knorr, Fred Franz, and Karl Adams. Certain members of the Writing Department might sign *if assigned to read the material by Karl Adams*, but they did not do so on any continuing basis.

ment, and Karl was unquestionably a more practical person than the vice president. Karl's assignments came, not from the Governing Body, but directly from President Knorr. Knorr himself assigned those who were to write primary articles (called "study articles") for the *Watchtower*. *All other writing assignments* for the men (aside from Fred Franz) in the headquarters Writing Department at that time *came through, and generally originated with, Karl*, although Karl was not a Governing Body member nor did he profess to be of the "anointed." In the project mentioned, he selected and assigned Ed Dunlap and me (then a Governing Body member) to work with him in writing the organizational handbook, each of us writing approximately one-third of the material. It may be worth noting that all three of us were consistently active in the organization's program of "field service" and meeting attendance.

When the project was nearing completion, Karl Adams wrote a letter to President Knorr, asking for guidance on specific points. While dealing with what we three had been developing, the letter, dated November 18, 1971, was not a joint composition by the three of us. The wording was that of Karl Adams himself. He was the presidentially appointed overseer of the Writing Department, and Ed Dunlap and I were his subordinates in that department. He was therefore certainly under no pressure to discuss what he discussed or to present the information in the way that he presented it. I believe that Karl would honestly acknowledge that fact. Note, then, what he wrote to President Knorr as to the effects that use of the organization's report slip has on the individual Witness, as presented in a section of his letter headed "Reporting Field Service":

> At present we report books, booklets and magazines placed, also subscriptions obtained. The result is that, all too often, the publishers [individual Witnesses] view their "success" in terms of placements. The literature is a wonderful aid in helping people to learn the truth, but the publishers are frequently inclined to view the placement as their "goal." When they meet someone who already has literature, instead of focusing their attention on the vital work of disciple making, they incline to think in terms of what new publication they have that they might place with the person. [Why?] They know that the congregation is going to keep a record of what they personally place. This influences their use of the literature. Also, the fact that placements are reported influences the basis on which servants [elders] in the congregation are inclined to appraise the work being done by the publishers. There is no report of the love shown to other brothers, or of how a person discharges

> Christian responsibilities in his home, or of his manifesting the fruitage of the spirit, so the tendency is to emphasize the value of these figures on the publisher's report card beyond what they deserve.

Few Witnesses could do other than agree with Karl Adams' observations, for they know them to be true. Karl had asked Ed Dunlap and me for our observations and we particularly commented on the Scriptural problems with the whole policy of reporting. Some of these comments are reflected in what Karl goes on to write. Yet it would be wrong to assume that what he wrote did not reflect *his own thinking* on the subject. Those knowing him know that he was not a person who easily adopted others' views or presented them as his own, particularly those of subordinates. Not only are the following words those of Karl Adams, the *thoughts* they express are also his, for he expressed them in essence in his discussion with us. I was, in fact, surprised at the degree of frankness manifest in his letter. Karl wrote:

> Admittedly, the entire arrangement of reporting our field service is something beyond what the Bible specifically requires of Christians. This being so, whatever may be done in the way of reporting should be handled in a way that will avoid any clash with Jesus' counsel, namely, "Take good care not to practice your righteousness in front of men in order to be observed by them." (Matt. 6:1) Also, at 2 Corinthians 10:12 Paul warned against seeking to exalt oneself by the making of comparisons. (See also Galatians 5:26.) Yet, the keeping of a record of placements tends to make publishers think in those terms. As is well known, circuit servants [overseers] have left hard-working servants [elders] in congregations discouraged because of pushing them on matters involving their field service reports, when they were actually trying hard to shepherd the flock—but, of course, that time does not show on the report. And, in speaking to the entire congregation, a circuit servant [overseer] often makes more of whether the congregation is placing 12 magazines per publisher than whether there is genuine Christian love in the congregation.

The effect on the individual Witness? Karl Adams' memorandum states:

> This viewpoint colors a person's appreciation of what the Bible actually says. Romans 15:1 refers to the fact that those who are strong ought to assist those who are not strong. The context is discussing one's faith. But servants [elders] have been trained to apply this to aiding publishers whose report of field service is low. And when they use scriptures that speak of "fine works," as at Titus

> 2:14, they are inclined to think principally of what shows up on a field service report, but the public preaching of the word is only a small part of the picture, as the context shows. (See Titus 1:16; 2:5; 3:15.)

Surely these comments illustrate graphically that, in contradiction to the Governing Body's revision of the James commentary, "human standards" *have* been set up, that they now are a controlling factor in what the individual Witness understands as to the "direction from God's Word," and that they exercise remarkable *pressure* on the organization members to conform and to seek to meet such human standards, even to the neglect of works that are clearly set out in Scripture. Though this letter by the Writing Department head was written back in 1971, Witnesses know that little has changed; the situation in this 21st century remains the same. Perhaps the only thing that has changed is that today few persons, probably not even Karl Adams himself (were he alive today), would feel free to write as frankly as he did.

Karl Adams' letter was brought by President Knorr to a Governing Body session. Though Karl had specifically suggested allowing ample time for members privately to review and assess its contents, aside from myself, the other Governing Body members had not previously seen the letter, and therefore were deprived of valuable time to think on its contents or to examine and meditate on the Scriptures cited. Those scriptural points, in fact, as also the well-known detrimental effect of the reporting policy on Witnesses, received little consideration in the session and the Body's decision was to continue as usual in the organization's traditional practice. Karl Adams was not surprised, nor were Ed Dunlap and I.

The points expressed in the letter written by this organizationally appointed overseer, occupying a sensitive position as acting head of the Writing Department, are expressions never found in any of the Watch Tower's publications. The concerns his memorandum so forcefully expressed are not even acknowledged. Yet their validity is undeniable. Though recognizing the truth of the points expressed, most Witnesses would be fearful to speak of them openly today. To do so would be to lay themselves open to the charge of disloyalty, to accusations of lacking humility and therefore being too proud to engage in the activities specified by the centralized authority. As stated, I seriously doubt that Karl Adams himself (during much of his life a prominent member of the Writing Department and later an instructor for the Gilead School) if he were still alive would feel comfortable

today about expressing his thoughts as he then did, not because he would feel differently about the validity of his expressions, but because of the unpleasant consequences that would probably follow.

Unquestionably, of all the "works" stressed for Jehovah's Witnesses to perform, the principal one is that of house-to-house activity with the Society's literature. No other service is viewed as so indicative, even determinative, of one's loyalty and devotion to God. What are its antecedents?

Earlier history

The evidence is that combined factors of *mass production and mass distribution* of literature played a major role in the emergence of this activity as the outstanding feature in the organization's program of works. During the presidency of the movement's founder, Charles Taze Russell, the printing of all Watch Tower literature was done by outside printing firms. For the first four decades of the organization's history, literature distribution was done largely by some individuals giving out free tracts (often in front of churches on Sundays) and by a limited number of "colporteurs" who received the literature at discount rates and sold it from door to door or in whatever way they might choose.

Early in the presidency of J. F. (Judge) Rutherford, the organization set up its own printing establishment. From that time onward, the Watch Tower Society gave increasing emphasis to "field service," activity in going from door to door offering literature to the public (none is distributed through book stores where people seek books through personal initiative).

In his Watch Tower-sponsored book *Faith on the March*, A. H. MacMillan, a headquarters staff member actively associated with the movement from the turn of the 20th century, describes the changed approach that developed, saying (on page 152):

> Russell had left it much to the individual as to how we were to fulfill our responsibilities. . . . Rutherford wanted to unify the preaching work and, instead of having each individual give his own opinion and tell what he thought was right and do what was in his own mind, gradually Rutherford himself began to be the main spokesman for the organization. That was the way he thought the message could best be given without contradiction. At the same time we began to realize that each one of us had a responsibility to go from house to house and preach.
>
> We were shown that it was a covenant-keeping arrangement. We had

> a duty to God, as well as a privilege and duty to our fellowmen to see that they were informed of God's purposes. God's favor and approval was not to be won by developing "character." In 1927 we were shown that the way each individual was to serve was to go from door to door. Sunday especially was stressed as the most opportune day to find people at home.

Individual thinking and expression as to 'fulfilling our responsibilities to God' thus began to be depreciated, taking on a negative connotation, and *organizational conformity* was stressed as meritorious. The duty of the individual, a 'duty owed to God,' and 'the way to serve' was clearly laid out: it was to "go from door to door" with the Watch Tower's literature. Watch Tower associates (not yet known as Jehovah's Witnesses, a name first applied in 1931) soon began referring to such door-to-door activity as "service," for that was '*the way* to serve God.' The term was always understood in this way; if used in another sense it was qualified, as in referring to a "baptismal service." But by itself "service" at that time always related to door-to-door work, not to any other activity related to their worship. Under the organization's direction it indeed had become the preeminent way for them to serve God. The Watch Tower associate who, on a Sunday morning, spent an hour or more in such door-to-door activity returned home with the feeling of having done his duty, his service to God—at least for that week.

Rutherford, before becoming part of the "Bible Student" (Watch Tower) movement, had shown interest in political activity. The effect of that background can probably be seen in some of the terminology that developed. We have already seen that he placed strong emphasis on "organization," so that this term came to replace the Scriptural term "congregation" when referring to the worldwide community of Witnesses, while individual congregations were called "companies." But more significantly it may be seen in his developing such terms as "campaigns" to refer to special "witnessing" activities at certain designated periods, in which "campaigns" (in some cases called "divisional campaigns") large numbers were urged to participate and thus contribute to the impressiveness of the "advertising" of the message proclaimed. The monthly "field service" instruction sheet was called "*The Bulletin*." Those participating in the activity were called "class workers" (later "publishers") and "pioneers" and were assigned "territories" to be covered. Groups of "publishers" worked under the direction of a field service "captain."

There is no evidence that Rutherford himself took any part in this door-to-door work. Based on expressions made by my uncle,

Fred Franz, and others who were headquarters members during Rutherford's presidency, it appears that when inquiry was made about this the answer given was that 'his responsibilities as president did not permit his engaging in this activity.' Thus he could at best say, "Do as I say"; he could not say, "Do as I do."

The book *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose* (page 96) shows that in 1920 something new was introduced to heighten the focus now placed on this work:

> The tightening up of preaching responsibility began in 1920 when everyone in the congregation who participated in the witness work was required to turn in a weekly report.

The time intervals for reporting thereafter varied from weekly to monthly and semimonthly, but the stress laid on the door-to-door preaching activity, once begun, continued to grow. Along with the related emphasis on organizational conformity and uniformity of thinking and action, the stress on door-to-door activity and on turning in a report of such is a major legacy of Rutherford's presidency that has remained to this day.

A Businesslike Approach

With Rutherford's death and his replacement by Nathan Knorr a new era of expansion began. Whereas Rutherford's presidency had a political cast to it, Knorr's presidency reflected his businessman's approach. (Nathan once said to Ed Dunlap that if he had not pursued a religious career he would have liked to have been the manager of a large department store, such as Wanamaker's of New York.) He greatly expanded and modernized the Society's printing facilities in Brooklyn and set up many new branch offices internationally, and expanded already existing ones, establishing modern printing plants in many of the larger countries of the world. Under his direction, the Watch Tower Society became one of the largest publishing organizations on the face of the earth. Initial printing of a new publication in English regularly was set at a million or more copies.

This vast printing capacity represented an "appetite" to be met, and I have personally heard Nathan Knorr—and other upper-level personnel—say, "We have to keep those presses busy." Idle equipment represented financial expense. The way the printing facilities would be kept busy was to move out what they produced and make way for publishing more, usually with one or more new books "released" each year. The primary outlet for this stream of publications has consistently been the Witnesses' door-to-door activity. Along with "quotas" of

hours to be met if one was to be exemplary, "magazine quotas" came into effect for "congregation publishers," each being urged to distribute 12 copies a month.[5]

The report slip has perennially been a major means for keeping this activity at a high level. The idea (often expressed) that these reports are needed for the organization to know how to plan its printing activity is a fiction—none of the Society's printing plants relies on such reports, for they gauge the demand not by the "field service" reports but by inventory reports from their own shipping departments and by monthly inventory reports received from the Branches.[6]

After posting on the "Publisher's Record Card," the individual "field service" reports are tabulated and compiled monthly by each congregation and forwarded to the organization's Brooklyn headquarters or, outside the United States, to one of its branch offices. Each branch office sends in monthly reports to Brooklyn, dealing principally with this publishing activity ("field service" hours, literature movement, related financial records). These are then compiled into a world report which is studied and analyzed for any signs of weakening. No other spiritual activity or facet of Christian life is the focus of anything approaching comparable scrutiny or is the object of such consistent concern. The report is viewed as the principal barometer of the "spiritual health" of the membership. Congregation elders know that low figures in any aspect of congregational "field service" activity will inevitably be called to their attention by traveling representatives (circuit and district overseers) with the responsibility laid on themselves to see that the report improves. The extent of their own participation in such activity often determines whether they retain their eldership or lose it. Branch offices around the world receive annual "Zone visits" by Governing Body members and other representatives and these visits focus particularly on this "field service" activity and the degree of success with which the Branch Committee is promoting it.

In view of all this, one can see why the memorandum to President Knorr by Writing Department head Karl Adams, and

5 The use of such "quotas" has been dropped, particularly after the publication of the organizational manual mentioned earlier in this chapter. Nonetheless, there is a sort of unwritten code that says that one should strive to spend at least ten hours a month in "field service." Elders and ministerial servants generally feel fairly comfortable if they are averaging that number of hours. Otherwise, when the visit of a traveling overseer is imminent, they feel a sense of concern.

6 Page 5 of Karl Adams' letter to Knorr similarly makes clear that these reports are in no way needed in order to assess or determine literature distribution.

the concerns expressed therein, had a basis in fact. Few Witnesses, however, realize that the points expressed in that 1971 memorandum have since been related many times by active, responsible elders as well as by concerned traveling representatives of the organization, and that their expressions were brought to the Governing Body's attention a number of times over the years.

Superimposing Organizational Concepts on Scriptural Terms

Six years after the Governing Body's discussion of Karl Adams' letter, an elder in New Jersey wrote to the Governing Body. He had been actively associated for forty years, and during thirty-five of these had been serving in a position of congregational responsibility as a "servant" or "elder." In his letter he expressed his concern about the "strong, almost demanding position that is taken about the external ministry of 'field service.'" As for his reasons for concern, he said:

> Interestingly enough, in all the epistles written to the early Christian congregations I find no "field service" sections directed to the congregations. Whatever passages directed to the congregations regarding "fine works" show no evidence of being related to congregational preaching activity. Even those texts repeatedly cited as authority, upon close examination are not actually dealing with congregational preaching.
>
> As a case in point: The publication for use at Kingdom Ministry School [a seminar for elders], on page 44 deals with elders taking the lead in evangelizing. To prove that point 1 Peter 5:2, 3 is cited. But while the scripture does encourage elders to be examples to the flock, the scripture nowhere mentions the preaching work or even infers it. The "example" referred to . . . apparently has reference to those things included in the verses, that is, "shepherding," being "willing," doing so "not for dishonest gain," and "not lording it over the flock," etc. Continuing, the scripture makes reference to "subjection," and "lowliness of mind" and "humility." . . . the scripture used as proof is not discussing the point at all.
>
> Continuing along this line, the book quotes Ephesians 5:15, 16 and 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13, to prove that the brothers benefit when they observe elders "working hard" in Kingdom preaching in the field. Again the words "working hard" that appear in the latter text, and "buy out the opportune time" as it appears in the former, [are] making no reference to external field preaching. Rather the thrust appears to be toward internal congregational service and examples.[7]

7 Letter from Anthony Fuelo, dated simply "January 1978."

His letter discussed the Scriptural teaching in First Corinthians chapter twelve that there is a diversification of spiritual gifts and a variety of ministries, *all* presented as desirable and important. This elder then expressed what many thinking Witnesses feel but are fearful to voice, saying:

> This is not to say that Kingdom preaching is wrong or unnecessary today. But in view of these facts should our thrust be so evidently in this direction—making this the main thing kept before the brothers, as we have been doing? Should we be so structured that we put certain field goals before the brothers and make all kinds of arrangements for holidays and vacation periods and in other ways place an inferred responsibility upon them not spelled out in the Scriptures (not to mention the servant body who must arrange, encourage and lead in this)? Should it be our role to constantly be applying pressure upon our brothers, whether subtle or obvious, in our sincere effort to spread the Kingdom message? In reality, this is what has been done and is being done.[8]

The letter came before the Governing Body in one of its sessions. The writer was a longtime, faithful, active elder and he had given Scriptural reasons for his concern. The attitude shown by the Governing Body was typical. Some questions were asked about the man himself, whether he was known by any of the Body members (one or two of them did know him), what his reputation was, and the letter was handed back to the Writing Department for answering. There had been virtually no discussion of either the substance of the letter or, more importantly, the Scriptural reasons advanced. It was simply not what the authority wanted to hear.

"Heavy Loads"—Why Heavy?

Reading such letters, I cannot help but call to mind the words of Jesus when he said of the religious leaders of his day, "They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them."[9] I remember that at one time I found it puzzling that Jesus would describe the traditions imposed by the Pharisees and others as a grievous "burden." Many of the traditions involved simple things such as washing of hands, of plates and cups. Others simply called for *not* doing certain things, such as refraining from specific acts on the Sabbath that traditional rulings of the religious leaders categorized as "work" or labor.[10] What, then, was so

8 *Ibid.*
9 Matthew 23:4.
10 Compare Matthew 12:1-2, 9-14; 15:1, 2; Mark 7:1-5.

burdensome about washing one's hands or refraining from certain work?

In analyzing the matter, however, it became clear that the truly grievous factor was that *their righteousness was being judged on this basis*. It was not the mere doing or not doing that produced such an oppressive weight. It was *having to conform to the standards of imperfect men*, standards imposed on them by ecclesiastical authority.[11] It was being *made constantly aware that failure to conform would result in their devotion to God being placed in question*, would result in their being viewed as lacking in faith and righteousness, as being fleshly, unspiritual persons. If they were at all conscientious this would be painful. The effect was a hobbling and straitjacketing of their exercise of conscience. It placed them in a man-made harness as to their service to God. By submission to this, service which should have brought joy became a wearisome load fastened upon them, one from which they never seemed to gain relief. What a contrast, then, is the invitation of God's Son:

> Come to me, all whose work is hard, whose load is heavy; and I will give you relief. Bend your necks to my yoke, and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble-hearted; and your souls will find relief. For my yoke is good to bear, my load is light.—Matthew 11:29, 30, *New English Bible*.

For anyone to apply these Biblical principles to the situation found among Jehovah's Witnesses would result in his being judged by the organization as someone desiring to shirk the obligation for sharing in "Kingdom preaching," even as an act of "apostasy." Yet, in a parallel way it is not that the activity of going from door to door is of itself such a demanding feat (most Witnesses go about it in a quite routine manner anyway), nor is the simple act of filling out of a report slip any more difficult than washing one's hands before eating. The burdensome factor lies in the *significance* that the organization attaches to these things, *the way they are used as indicators of the genuineness of one's devotion to God*. And the testimony of the organization's own representatives shows that the Scriptural principles discussed do indeed fit.

Expressions of Trusted, Active Elders

On February 10, 1978, the Service Department Committee sent out letters to a number of respected elders in different parts of the

11 The rulings on sabbath requirements eventually came to fill two volumes, covering hundreds of actions. Though no single ruling may have been extremely difficult to observe, the *sheer volume* of the rulings also contributed to the weightiness of the burden.

United States. They were asked to comment on certain questions, including the effect of existing field service arrangements. Some of these men had been traveling representatives (circuit and district overseers) of the organization but they were now family men, and interest was expressed in hearing how they saw matters in their current situation. In many cases, their comments were such as most of Jehovah's Witnesses would hesitate to voice except to trusted friends, lest they be labeled as "unspiritual," "disloyal." I am quite sure that if these particular men had not been invited to express their viewpoint by the Service Department, they too would have been very hesitant to do so.

One elder in a northeastern state, formerly a member of the headquarters staff, replying to the Service Department's inquiry, included this statement about the use of a "report slip":

> Many brothers really resent the time reporting requirement which turns a very personal act of worship into a tedious organization routine. If any are engaging in door-to-door activity or other activity merely to turn in time, then the report is probably not worth the paper it is written on. If the publisher is engaging in the service because of his love for Jehovah and the "sheep" and for the joy he gets from this personal act of worship, then he will surely continue to do it without the "reporting prod."
>
> If we are supporting a certain number of "publishers" due to the reporting "prod," then of what value really is the report? If we discontinued the reporting of time and found that many quit the field service, one must ask how honest and useful their service in this regard was in the first place.[12]

Another reply came from an elder in a southern state. As a youth he had pioneered during each high school vacation, had entered "Bethel Service" upon graduation (at the age of 16), upon leaving immediately went into "pioneer service," then "special pioneer service," became a circuit overseer and, later, a district overseer, and at the time of writing did "substitute circuit work" for the organization. As he says, "By all standards I would be considered a 'field man.' The field to me is easier than rolling up my sleeves and tackling the many exhausting problems we have." Now a father of two children, he wrote:

> A large number of publishers [Witnesses] I know express themselves as constantly feeling guilty that they are not doing more in field activity. Many fine Christians who likely are doing all they can, realistically, live in abject guilt. They find little joy in

12 The writer, Worth Thornton, was once a secretary in the president's office at the international headquarters and a brother-in-law of Harley Miller who was then a prominent member of the Service Department Committee.

> their lives. Service has been made so complex, so highly structured and organized that many feel they are not serving God unless they go to a meeting for service, knock on doors with a sermon (yes, sermon), and place literature. Success is still measured in numbers because of the reporting system, despite all contrary efforts. . . .
>
> With the mental impression that service must be highly structured, overlooked is the natural and rewarding avenue of service, informal witnessing in one's daily life and/or calls on persons one knows. Just talking about the Kingdom is somehow not viewed as real or true service to our brothers as a whole. Simplicity is overlooked . . . .
>
> More and more publishers are questioning the rationale for the publisher's record card, and in recent years I find it harder and harder to defend Scripturally. One must admit it has produced a host of deeply rooted problems. . . . To a large extent the hours/placement yardstick of Christianity is still set forth by traveling overseers who are almost exclusively field service oriented.
>
> We can get publishers into the field by hand-holding, a little pressure, a little cajoling or appeal to guilt feelings, yet long hard experience tells us this does not make them spiritually strong. . . .

Equally revealing is this portion of the response of an elder in St. Paul, Minnesota, who wrote:

> Another problem that exists but is not openly discussed is the view the brothers in general have toward traveling overseers and those at Bethel [the international headquarters]. Since I served in circuit work for a number of years and now serve as an elder in one congregation, I have seen both sides. But there are very strong feelings that traveling overseers and Bethel brothers, including the Governing Body, "do not understand the problems of the average person in the organization." It is felt that these brothers are "sheltered" and that decisions are being made by men who are not truly aware of the problem. Strong feelings exist that such brothers "have everything given to them," "do not work for a living," "do not know what is going on," etc. The struggle for making a living is a tremendous burden on the brothers and what is given as advice is not taken as spiritually refreshing, but is taken as advice from an organization that has men sitting in Bethel who are not realistic and who cannot appreciate the pressures of everyday life because they do not have such pressures. Again, this type of thing is not openly discussed, but it is there. . . .

A December 29, 1976, memorandum sent to the Service Committee of the Governing Body by Robert Wallen, himself the secretary of that committee and a secretary in the Executive Offices, illustrates the validity of the previous quotation, and also carries the point a bit farther. Robert Wallen writes:

> Many of us, including myself since I have the privilege of being

> connected with some service matters here at Bethel, who tell others what to do, how to spend time in the field, go from house to house, on return visits and on Bible studies, find we are not able to do what we are asking our brothers to do. We may excuse ourselves because of our assignments in Bethel. But if we are going to judge others on the basis of a card showing how much time they spend in the field we must be willing to be judged by the same card, by that same standard. I wonder if we are fearful that if we do not so judge on the matter of time no field service at all will be done because we need "goals" as incentive to get people to preach. . . . Jesus said that the "truth will set you free." He said that his yoke was kindly and his load light. His apostle Paul in two places warned us about comparing ourselves with one another—which is what this standard that has been set does—and shows that the greater way is the way of love.—2 Cor. 10:12; Gal. 6:4.
>
> . . . I truly believe that some consideration should be given to the consciences of many who are concerned because they cannot do what is asked of them and still meet all other obligations of being a Christian.

He thus deals with the same areas involving the setting of human standards that "must be met" and the free exercise of individual conscience which the Governing Body saw fit to excise from the James commentary.[13]

Another request for information was sent out, this one by the Writing Committee of the Governing Body. In response, the members of the Branch Committee of South Africa, after having earlier made the observation that "few of the public really read our magazines" as distributed from door to door, made this additional expression as to the actual motivation behind the "field service" of Jehovah's Witnesses:

> Might it not be an idea to scrap field service reports altogether and urge publishers to look for the sheep, to daily try and share the good news by means of a magazine or a return visit, or a telephone call with someone? Are many publishers not now serving out of a sense of duty, because they feel they must turn in a field service report, instead of out of love for Jehovah and people in the territory?[14]

With the exception of the memorandum from Robert Wallen, all of these last-quoted expressions came as a result of inquiries from the

13 I believe that the seriousness of all this is compounded by the fact that, at least during the years of my experience there, several members of the Governing Body only rarely engaged in field service. Most of them did not attend the Tuesday night book studies and did not share in the group service activity from those locations. That was true of Nathan Knorr, Fred Franz, Grant Suiter, Milton Henschel and others. I believe that Robert Wallen was as cognizant of this as I was, in fact as many in the headquarters were.

14 This letter, dated November 3, 1978, is signed by Jack Jones, J. R. Kikot, and C. F. Muller, all members of the South Africa Branch Committee.

organization; none came unsolicited. In each case, the men whose expressions were requested had been written because of long experience and known loyalty. Their expressions were requested in a time when a brief period of willingness—from about 1976 to 1978—to hear frank observations from others was in effect. This receptiveness was largely due to the major change in the administration in 1975/76, and a temporary period of greater openness. After that time passed, no such letters were encouraged. And even those that came received only minimal attention by the Governing Body as a whole.

One must ask, Do the expressions in the letters from these trusted men indicate that Jesus' words—of persons finding relief and rest from tiresome labor in refreshing service to him—were finding fulfillment in the organization? Or do they reflect the bearing of a wearisome load imposed by men, men who show no concern to ease the burden, who in effect do not "raise a finger" to do so? (Matthew 23:4) Surely it is not difficult to see why the Governing Body majority favored rewriting part of the *Commentary on the Letter of James* and eliminating any reference unfavorable to "pressure" or to human standards set up that one "must follow."

Setting Up "Works of Law"

When the apostle Paul wrote about salvation not being dependent on works it was frequently in the context of law and "works of law."[15] Does this alter the picture above set out? No, for the reason that, for Jehovah's Witnesses, the works they are constantly urged to perform have become, to all intents and purposes, works prescribed by law—human, organizational law, but still law. The Greek term for "law" (*nómos*) used in scripture applies not only to written laws in a legal sense but "very broadly to any norm, rule, custom, usage, or tradition." [16] Somewhat similarly, in English "law" is defined as "a binding custom or practice of a community; a rule of conduct or action prescribed or formally recognized as binding or enforced by a controlling authority."[17] The binding nature of the works prescribed by the controlling authority of the Watch Tower organization—not only as regards "field service" (to be performed in the "formally recognized" way) but also as to regularity of attendance at the five weekly meetings—is evident. These may not be formally *stated* as "laws" but they are "formally

15 Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16; 3:2, 5, 10.
16 See The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, under "*nómos*."
17 *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* under "law."

recognized" as binding obligations on all members. The Witness is made to feel guilt before God if he or she does not adhere to the organization's prescribed program of activity. This, combined with peer pressure, provides the means for the "controlling authority" to "enforce" the performance of these works.

We have seen the genesis of the Witnesses' door-to-door activity and that in course of time this activity came to be presented as an essential rule for all "faithful," "loyal," Witnesses, a divinely-imposed duty. Fulfillment of this was presented as necessary to gain God's favor and approval; failure to perform it would result in "blood guilt" (the text in Ezekiel 3:18, 19, frequently being used to support this view). This is undeniably the way the vast majority of Witnesses view the matter to this day. Similar to the ancient pattern of the nation of Israel under the Law code, a structured program of weekly "service" activity began to be set out for them to perform and they came to feel that their regularity in performing this was evidence of their righteousness before God. (Compare Luke 18:11, 12.) In more recent times, the incredibly dogmatic viewpoints presented during Rutherford's time are rarely stated so brashly, in such crass terms. Yet the *same basic idea* is regularly expressed in a more subtle, sophisticated manner. The ultimate effect—of imposing a sense of guilt on those not complying with all organizational arrangements—is still achieved.

The emphasis on door-to-door activity soon converted that work into a primary standard for determining whether a man qualified for eldership. The book *Faith on the March* (page 158) says of those who were congregational elders during the 1920s and early 1930s:

> Those who refused to swallow their pride and follow the example of Jesus and his disciples in the door-to-door ministry soon found themselves out of the organization entirely. They soon found that all the others of the respective congregations were participating in the witness work which developed them mentally and otherwise brought them to maturity. These active ones became true "elders" by reason of their loyalty and zeal in the Lords' service. They were not elected to an office of "elder"; but they became elders by their own service activity; then they were appointed to positions of responsibility and service in the organization because they had shown the proper qualifications.

In setting out qualifications for men who rendered service of oversight in a congregation, the apostle Paul said nothing of door-to-door witnessing activity. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9) But this now be-

came a major rule for judging the qualifications of all Witness men who would serve in that capacity, to determine if they should be organizationally appointed. In practice, it became a law "enforced by the controlling authority," the law governing congregational appointments, and it remains so today. It is a well known fact that when elders in a congregation receive notice of the visit of a Society representative (circuit or district overseer), in almost all cases their thoughts immediately go to their personal "field service report" and whether it will meet with approval. They rarely think of the spiritual qualities the apostle sets out in Scripture for those who do shepherding of the flock.

These men know that the Scriptures urge showing concern for the sick, for needy persons, widows, orphans, those who are depressed or spiritually weak.[18] Yet they do not feel they have control over their time to perform such services. Though they may feel impelled to visit such ones, the organization's demands on their available time require their devoting it to organizational activities, particularly field service. There is no place on the "Field Service Report" slip for them to list time spent in scripturally-supported visitations to the ill and needy, at least not if these are baptized Witnesses. Ironically, an elder might be more inclined to visit such a person if he or she were *not* baptized than if the person were baptized, since he could then count the time spent with that one. Elders are even told that if time spent counseling or upbuilding someone might interfere with their support of "field service" they should ask the person to accompany them in the "field service" and talk with him or her as they walk from door to door. Common sense would recognize the impracticability of such arrangement, but this simply demonstrates the dominant importance given to "field service" and the way all other interests must bend to it.[19]

One of the elders whose thoughts were requested by the Service Department told of the presence in his congregation of a district overseer, two circuit overseers, and their wives during a convention period. For part of the time during their visit, the elder had lined up some calls on Witnesses needing help. He specifies the kinds of persons to be visited: "A wife-beating, conscience-stricken young man; several families whose youngsters were involved with marijuana; an elderly, frail sister whose husband just died, fearful about the future; a sister whose baby died at home during a natural,

18 1 Thessalonians 5:14; James 1:26, 27; 2:14-16; 1 John 3:17, 18.

19 Circuit overseer Wayne Cloutier, quoted in Chapter 7, pages 212, 213, mentions this practice in his letter, commenting on its ineffectiveness. His expression is but one of many made by experienced elders.

at-home birth process she thought the Society was advocating; an elderly sister feeling guilty because her field activity was not what it had been; and so on." He relates that the district overseer said he and the others could not go with the elders on these calls but wished to spend time following up expiration slips (for persons of the public whose magazine subscription had expired) during the rest of the week. As the elder says, "It was just keeping the traveling men busy, occupied, accomplishing nothing at all but counting time spent in the field."

Thus traditional policies override Scripture, even nullify it. (Compare Matthew 15:3-6.) The result is that these men, designated as shepherds of the flock, often feel fettered and restricted as regards doing what they might normally and conscientiously do on behalf of the sheep. There is no question that "field service" is to them a "law." Contrariwise, God's Word tells us that there can be no law against one's spirit-impelled expressions of love, kindness, and goodness. (Galatians 5:22, 23) The organization's directives, having the force of "law," frequently have the effect of stifling such expressions and thus nullify the counsel of God's Word.

There is certainly nothing about going from door to door in religious activity of itself that is contrary to Scripture (although as will be shown in a later chapter there is equally nothing in Scripture that advocates it). What is wrong is the coercive pressure involved, the attempt to impose feelings of guilt on any who do not participate therein, as though by not participating they are unfaithful to God, disloyal to his Son, lacking in zeal and devotion for righteousness, even portraying them as undoubtedly proud and self-sparing. Such tactics are inexcusable from a Christian standpoint.

As another example of the organization's converting Christian service into a "work of law," the August 1, 1990 *Watchtower*, on page 30, approves of the quotation of this statement found in an earlier 1955 *Watchtower* (page 138):

> Some may be inclined to view the full-time ministry as the exception. But in this they err, for by virtue of his dedication vow <u>every Christian is obligated to serve full time unless circumstances over which he has no control make that impossible</u>.

As the context of the article shows, and as all Witnesses know, serving "full time" for a Witness means being either a "pioneer,"

serving as an organizational representative in traveling work, or working at one of its institutions. Any other way that an individual might feel that he or she could serve God "full time" would simply not qualify under the definition "formally recognized" by the "controlling authority." The Scriptures urge us to serve God with our whole heart, mind and strength but they clearly do not pin the matter down and bind us by prescribing just where and when and how we will do this. It is men who seek, sincerely or insincerely, to be spiritual taskmasters over others who do this. Nowhere in the Scriptures did Christ or his apostles ever imply that, 'unless circumstances beyond one's control made it impossible,' anyone was "obligated" to serve God in such organizationally prescribed ways. The very language employed by the organization shows that the matter has indeed been one of law, a law of human invention.

In one Governing Body session where the matter of giving greater emphasis to "pioneering" came up, Lloyd Barry expressed concern at the attitude of young Witnesses in the United States. He pointed out that in Japan (where he had for some years been the Branch Overseer) most young people among the Witnesses went pioneering promptly upon graduating from school, and he added, "In Japan, it's the thing to do!" When given opportunity by the chairman to comment, I expressed my hope that this was not really the reason for those young people becoming pioneers, that I hoped that if they did become such it was out of love for God and the desire to be of help to others—but not because "it was the thing to do." Missionaries who have served in Japan acknowledge that there is considerable peer pressure connected with much of the unusually high degree of pioneering done there. After listening to a number of strong statements about pushing pioneer service, including "vacation pioneering" as a virtual obligation where anyone's circumstances allowed for it, I again held up my hand and said that I thought that if this were truly the case then we members of the Governing Body should be the first to set the example. I asked, "How many of us have been using our vacation periods to do 'vacation pioneering'? We *could* do it, but do we? And let us not plead our age as a reason for not doing it, since in our publications we regularly present as fine examples aged persons who are in the pioneer service. If we do not do this ourselves then why should we pressure other persons to do it?" The expression produced some stares but no comments and the discussion moved on.

The making of certain works to be virtual works of law may give the appearance of great devotion to God, and of zeal for the interests of his Kingdom, even as it gave such appearance in the time of the Pharisees. But stress on such works of law often actually reflects moral and spiritual laziness. It takes far more thought and effort, demands much more of the heart and mind, calls for a more thoughtful, balanced and reasonable setting of personal example to build people up in faith and love so that good deeds flow out from hearts that are responsive, than it does to make people feel under obligation, or to create in them a guilt complex. The latter is the worldly, legalistic method, not the Christian way. Outward conformity is no true indicator of the genuineness of one's heart motive. Pressure to conform, the programming of people's lives and time by channeling their thinking and efforts into specific activities designed to promote predetermined organizational goals—all this only serves to obstruct and vitiate the spontaneity of service. That spontaneity is the natural result of faith and love and requires Christian freedom if it is to have full expression.

Again, the memorandum by Robert Wallen illustrates these principles. On page 3, he writes:

> When we look at the standard that has been set, which in large part is the publisher's record card of time spent in the field service—for which it is difficult to find a Scriptural precedent—where do we find the true measure of a person's devotion? Does it tell us the kind of a person the individual is? What he is like in the home with his family? What kind of help does he give to others? How does he conduct himself on the job? How much time does he spend shepherding? Does he do kind things for others? Does he walk uprightly, care for the sick, handle emergency situations in his life, and in the lives of others in the congregation, with love and care for others? In short does that card really give us the true measure of a person, the measure by which we are judging the abilities, but more importantly the spirituality of a person?

I have quoted from several respected men and their expressions of concern. Some wrote in response to a specific request from the organization for observations. There are many, many others who would have written similarly if given the opportunity. I think it is noteworthy that, whether requested or unrequested, in every case their letters were not viewed as mer-

iting anything beyond the very briefest discussion by the Governing Body—and that includes the letter by Service Committee secretary Wallen. Expressions of this kind were simply not what most of the men on the Body wanted to hear. They did not line up with the organization's set goals and would have called for a marked change from the organization's traditional way of dealing with its members. In the decade or so since these men expressed their concerns, in many cases giving their Scripture-based reasons, nothing has changed. No finger has been lifted.

7

From House to House

I have preached to you, and instructed you both in public and in your homes.—Acts 20:20*, Jerusalem Bible.*

PROBABLY NO other feature of their activity so distinguishes Jehovah's Witnesses as their door-to-door visitation. People around the world are accustomed to seeing them call at their homes with Bible literature and magazines, in some areas every few weeks. While it is true that there are other religions that are strong on evangelizing and that display a missionary spirit, there are none in which going from door to door is viewed, not simply as one means for spreading a message, but as—in itself—an evidence of the genuineness of one's Christianity.

If the question were put to the headquarters organization of the Watch Tower Society whether each member (if physically able) must do house-to-house witnessing to be a true Witness, in fact to be a true Christian, the answer would probably be that this is not an absolute requirement. (Actually, it would be extremely difficult to get a clear, straightforward answer on such a question; the headquarters organization is remarkably reticent about expressing itself in writing on sensitive issues and, even when given, answers are often couched in ambiguous terms, or evasive and roundabout reasonings.)

We have already seen, however, that responsible men in the organization acknowledge that there is serious reason to question whether in reality the Witness community as a whole engages in this activity simply out of a heartfelt desire to do it, as something freely motivated, done without any sense of compulsion.

Why then is it done? The evidence is that it is something that has, to all intents and purposes, become a virtual rule of law, so that omission of the act brings a sense of guilt, much in the same way in which a practicing Catholic would feel guilt if failing to attend Mass on a regular basis. As shown on page 191, longtime Witness and headquarters member A. H. MacMillan plainly stated

that door-to-door work came to be viewed as "a covenant-keeping arrangement" and "a duty to God." Though claiming to believe the apostolic teaching that we are saved by faith and not by works, we regularly find statements implying otherwise in the Watch Tower publications. As but one example, the *Watchtower* of July 15, 1979, page 14, states:

> It is by our endurance in proclaiming "this good news of the kingdom" that we may attain to salvation.

For Witnesses, "proclaiming 'this good news'" has only one meaning, field service, going from door to door with the organization's literature.

There is little doubt that the majority of Jehovah's Witnesses have come to accept the teaching that this particular method of door-to-door witnessing is a God-ordained one, that it was the method used by Christ and his apostles and disciples, and that it is the best and most effective way to accomplish a worldwide preaching of the good news in our time. The depth to which this view is ingrained in many is clearly illustrated in the December 15, 1965, issue of the *Watchtower* magazine, which tells of the activity of Jehovah's Witnesses in Communist China.

One article recounts the experiences of Stanley Jones, a missionary in that country. He relates that after the Communist conquest of Shanghai, where the Witnesses' activity was centered, they initially had freedom to carry on their work. About twelve months later, in 1951, they were told by the Chinese authorities that they could preach in their Kingdom Halls, conduct Bible studies in people's homes, but that house-to-house work was not allowed. The Watch Tower missionaries, including Jones, who were not Chinese, ceased this activity. The Chinese Witnesses, however, continued on going from door to door and Stanley Jones states that he and the other foreign missionaries "were very pleased" to see this.

Although the Chinese officials tolerated this for a time, they later began bringing to the police station the Chinese Witnesses found going door to door in spite of the decree. It reached the point where three Witness women were detained for four days. Jones says that the missionaries were anxious to see how the Chinese Witnesses would react to this and that they were "delighted" on seeing that they "were determined to go on and preach just the same." He states that the missionaries counseled them to take care to avoid any difficulties if possible. Although they themselves refrained from doing it, and apparently felt justified in such abstention, the missionaries were obviously in favor of the Chinese members continuing such door-to-door activity in spite of the official declaration and the serious risks involved. What were the consequences? Stanley Jones relates:

> Then Sister Nancy [Yuen] was taken from the house-to-house work to the police station and detained. She had four children, one of them only one year old. I approached a lawyer for assistance, and he said: "We cannot do a thing. If the matter is in the hands of the police, we cannot interfere." . . . Now, that sister was detained for a period of four years before she was finally taken to court and sentenced. Just what her sentence was, I do not know. Another sister, a schoolteacher, likewise a mother of four children, was also arrested.

With clear signs of growing danger, what would move the mothers of small children to risk the frightful prospect of being cut off for an indefinite period from those children, *even separated from a one-year-old baby*? They knew that the missionaries had ceased such activity, yet they continued on. Why? Did they and the other Chinese Witnesses view going from door to door as something entirely optional, just *one of many acceptable ways* of sharing Scriptural information with other persons? Or did they view it as THE way to proclaim the good news, a God-ordained way that they were under obligation to carry out? If the latter is the case, why did they feel that way; what or who caused them to adopt that view?

Fourteen years after the article about Stanley Jones appeared, the July 15, 1979, *Watchtower* carried an article containing a first-person account by Nancy Yuen, now released from prison. This article prepared the way for a major article in the same issue on the importance of house-to-house witnessing (an article written by Governing Body member Lloyd Barry). Nancy Yuen tells what happened to her and why it came about:

> By early 1956 . . . we began to get warnings to stop our preaching and confine our activity to the Kingdom Hall. However, I felt that I had to carry out our God-given commission to preach, so I continued to engage in the door-to-door work.
>
> I was repeatedly arrested and detained for questioning, the detention sometimes lasting for five hours and sometimes up to three days. In the meantime, because my husband had moved to Hong Kong in 1953, I applied for permission to join him there. The authorities said they would issue my exit permit on the condition that I stop preaching. I refused to stop and consequently never obtained the permit.

All Christians should view themselves as having a "God-given commission" to make expression of their faith to others. They should be willing to suffer loss of freedom, even of life itself, rather than prove unfaithful to that commission. That is certainly not at issue here. Nor is there any rightful reason to doubt the sincerity of Nancy Yuen or seek to detract from the self-sacrificing attitude she demonstrated. She is clearly a woman of great determination. The real question is: Does God's commission to Christians as to making known the good news carry along with it the duty to do this *by a particular method*, namely, by going from door to door? Is that method something taught in Scripture as *the preeminent way* of proclaiming the good news, an *identifying mark* of the true follower of Jesus Christ? Nancy Yuen evidently had come to believe this, since her own words indicate that she viewed such activity as a something she 'had to do.' The Watch Tower Society's representatives said nothing to give her, or the other mother of four children, any reason to believe otherwise. That her example was used to prepare the way for an article by a Governing Body member in favor of house-to-house witnessing surely implies an approval of that attitude.

What happened to Nancy Yuen as a result of the viewpoint she had come to hold and believe as Scriptural? She relates:

> Finally, in the latter part of 1956, after being arrested six times for preaching I was again detained when a householder notified the authorities that I was preaching from house to house. After that I was not released.

Before she could again be united as a family with her husband and children in Hong Kong, *twenty-three years went by*. Her children were now no longer young children but grown adults in their late twenties and early thirties. She had not been with them during most of their formative years. First detained for four years until her trial, she was then sentenced to prison, after some years was released, began preaching again, was rearrested and resentenced, the prison sentences totaling twenty years in all.

In a letter I received from a Witness in a midwestern state, the writer (herself a mother of three children) said: "I don't know how you feel about things like that but I burst into tears after I finished reading it." She explained that

what most deeply upset her for days thereafter was: Did that *have to* happen? Is it actually *God* who requires or impels his servants to engage in this door-to-door activity at such a cost? Or is it *men*?

Nancy Yuen stated her own belief, saying:

> I had to give up everything, even my little children to be loyal to God.

She clearly believed that loyalty to God required her to go from door to door in spite of a law that prohibited—not preaching—but preaching *by that method*. Her belief clearly resulted from what she was taught in the Watch Tower publications. In fact, the year before her arrest the *Watchtower* of July 1, 1955, page 409, in an article on baptism, said this, under the subheading "Requirements":

> [10] **It is expected of the dedicated one that he will uphold the cause of the Father, the cause of true worship, will preach in honor of the Word and name of Jehovah God, will fully bear his responsibilities as a minister, a preacher in the field service from house to house, and otherwise participate fully in the activities of the New World society, to advance the proclamation of the Kingdom and uphold the true worship of Jehovah. The dedicated one must be a house-to-house witness as was Christ Jesus and the apostles to the extent of his ability, and must otherwise be a witness and announcer of the theocratic kingdom of righteousness.**

Which brings us back to the real issue: Is this belief true? If it is, then all the suffering that resulted in Nancy Yuen's case, and the suffering experienced in other cases for similar reasons, may rightly be viewed as part of the "suffering for Christ," a necessary sacrifice, of small consequence when compared with being loyal to God and his Word. In that case all the responsibility for the suffering experienced lies totally and completely with the governmental authorities who took such harsh, repressive measures.

If, on the other hand, the view developed in the mind and heart of Nancy Yuen and in the other mother of four and in the other Chinese Witnesses—as well as in the minds and hearts of many others in other lands—is *not* clearly and unmistakably taught in the Bible, if it is instead the result of an organizational policy based on

human reasoning, then serious questions cannot help but arise as to the degree of responsibility that rests with the source of that teaching, and presenting Nancy Yuen's case as a fine example.

Some may say that this case was something unusual, which it was, and that the attitude shown does not necessarily reflect the attitude of most Witnesses. Perhaps not to the same virtually unquestioning degree, or with the same willingness to risk comparable losses, but nonetheless thousands have experienced arrest and imprisonment simply because they felt under obligation to maintain that method of spreading their message in the face of contrary legal restrictions.[1]

Even in those lands where a large measure of freedom prevails and where likelihood of arrest is remote, anyone who is, or has been, one of Jehovah's Witnesses must honestly admit that they have been taught that door-to-door activity is an especially vital part of their worship, virtually an essential evidence of their discipleship to Christ. They also know in their hearts that if they fail to engage in that activity with some regularity they are viewed as "spiritually weak" by their associates, creating in many a sense of guilt.

Illustrating these points is a letter to the Watch Tower Society written by a circuit overseer, in which he opens his heart on what he has seen in his area of activity. He states:

> This letter is being written after months of thoughtful consideration and many heart-to-heart talks with publishers and elders. I have prayerfully considered the problem and hope that I can clearly express its dimensions to the Society. Of the 25 or so elders I've spoken with in long, intimate conversation, only 2 haven't expressed feelings of guilt at not being able to live up to the objectives established for them by the Society.

Along with the schedule of meetings and study laid out for them, and constant urgings to "set a better lead in field service," he states that many "feel they are under a constant strain to push, push, push with never enough time to do anything well." He goes on to say:

> Many have told me that past visits from circuit overseers have been far less than encouraging. They say the circuit overseer always comes with the message to do more, more, more. How does this affect people who are already filled with feelings of personal failure and guilt? One brother remarked:
>
> "The circuit overseers have passed through the congregation like a motor boat making waves. After they leave everyone's life is just a little more unsettled." Another

1 I myself experienced jailing and risked suffering violence for this very reason. See *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 12, 13, 15.

said: "Their talks many times have the effect of beating a faithful and tired horse that already feels overworked."[2]

Making clear that these are not simply the complaints of disgruntled or self-centered, self-sparing persons, the circuit overseer goes on to say: "Some making these expressions are among the best qualified elders and publishers in the circuit."

Throughout the world, every elder and every "ministerial servant" ("deacon") of Jehovah's Witnesses knows that, along with attending meetings three times a week (involving a total of five individual meetings), he must engage in door-to-door visitation with some degree of regularity or risk removal from his assignment as being "not exemplary." Because their time is limited, elders find themselves faced with sacrificing or putting off other things that in their hearts they may feel have higher priority, including family matters, spending time with their children, visitation of the ill, and similar activities. This can mean becoming like spiritual marionettes, responding when the strings are pulled by an external source. It is also undeniable that many Witness women have felt obliged to keep on engaging in door-to-door calling despite the strenuous objections of non-Witness husbands, even though knowing that to continue doing this could produce marital trouble and, in some cases, divorce.

What, then, is the basis for this belief, one that causes Witnesses to view participation in door-to-door work in a way comparable to that in which a Catholic would view attendance at Mass?

House to House and Door to Door—The Same?

The teaching of the leadership of Jehovah's Witnesses about house-to-house witnessing is based largely on such texts as Acts 5:42, and 20:20. In the Watch Tower Society's *New World Translation* these read:

> And every day in the temple and from house to house they continued without letup teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ, Jesus.
>
> While I [Paul] did not hold back from telling you any of the things that were profitable nor from teaching you publicly and from house to house.

The deduction is made that "from house to house" indicates door-to-door activity, going consecutively from one door to the

2 From a letter from circuit overseer Wayne Cloutier in Connecticut Circuit 2, dated December 11, 1977.

next, one door after the other, visiting people without previous invitation and generally without previous acquaintance. Does that deduction necessarily follow?

When the *New World Translation* was first published, the Watch Tower Society focused considerable attention on the original Greek phrase (*kat'oikon*) from which the rendering "from house to house" comes. It was emphasized that the preposition *kata* (literally meaning "according to") is here used in a *distributive* sense. So, it was claimed that the phrase "from house to house" has the same sense as "from door to door," that is, of going from one door to the next door along a street.

The claim does not hold up under examination and thought. In the first place, *distributive* is not the same as *consecutive*. A person can go from "house to house" by going from a home in one area to a home in another area, just as a doctor making "house calls" might go from home to home. It does not at all require the idea of consecutive door-to-door visitation.

Any claim that the use of the preposition *kata* in the distributive sense *requires* the rendering "from house to house" in order to be correct and accurate, is, in fact, exploded by the *New World Translation* itself.

Few Witnesses realize that the identical phrase (*kat'oikon*) translated "from house to house" in the *New World Translation*'s rendering of Acts, chapter five, verse 42, also occurs in chapter two, verse 46. Below are presentations of these verses as found in the Watch Tower Society's *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*, which contains the *New World Translation* in its right-hand column:

Acts 2:46

46 καθ' ἡμέραν τε προσκαρτεροῦντες according to day and persevering ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ, κλῶντές τε like-mindedly in the temple, breaking and κατ' οἶκον ἄρτον, μετελάμβανον according to house bread, they were partaking τροφῆς ἐν ἀγαλλιάσει καὶ ἀφελότητι of food in exultation and simplicity καρδίας, 47 αἰνοῦντες τὸν θεὸν καὶ ἔχοντες of heart, praising the God and having	the need. 46 And day after day they were in constant attendance at the temple with one accord, and they took their meals in private homes and partook of food with great rejoicing and sincerity of heart, 47 praising God and

Acts 5:42

ὅτι κατηξιώθησαν ὑπὲρ τοῦ because they were counted worthy over the ὀνόματος ἀτιμασθῆναι· 42 πᾶσάν τε name to be dishonored; all and ἡμέραν ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ καὶ κατ' οἶκον οὐκ day in the temple and according to house not ἐπαύοντο διδάσκοντες καὶ they were ceasing teaching and εὐαγγελιζόμενοι τὸν χριστὸν Ἰησοῦν. declaring good news about the Christ Jesus.	dishonored in behalf of his name. 42 And every day in the temple and from house to house they continued without letup teaching and declaring the good news about the Christ, Jesus.

As the left-hand interlinear portion shows, the same phrase, with the same distributive sense of *kata* appears in both texts. Yet in Acts 2:46, the rendering is not "from house to house" but "in private homes." Why?

Because it is illogical to think that the disciples' taking meals was done by going from one house to the next on down the street, and since the Watch Tower Society wishes that particular sense to attach to the phrase "from house to house" (in support of its door-to-door activity), it does not want to raise probable questions by using the rendering "house to house" here. As stated, most Witnesses do not realize this switching of renderings and the Watch Tower Society prefers not to call attention to it or address it openly.

In Acts 20:20, the phrase appears again, although the word for "house" or "homes" is here in the plural (*kat'oikous*):

ἐπιβουλαῖς τῶν Ἰουδαίων· 20 ὡς οὐδὲν plots of the Jews; as nothing ὑπεστειλάμην τῶν συμφερόντων I drew back of the (things) bearing together τοῦ μὴ ἀναγγεῖλαι ὑμῖν καὶ διδάξαι ὑμᾶς of the not to recount to you and to teach you δημοσίᾳ καὶ κατ' οἴκους, to public [place] and according to houses,	20 while I did not hold back from telling you any of the things that were profitable nor from teaching you publicly and from house to house.

Again it is simply a translator's decision how this Greek phrase will be rendered. That the principal translator of the *New World Translation*, Fred Franz, recognized this is shown by the footnote to this verse as found in a large family style edition of the *New World Translation*. The footnote reads:

> ▫ Or, "and in the private houses."

It is not that translating *kat'oikon* (or *kat'oikous*) as "from house to house" is wrong. It is a perfectly proper translation and is found in many other translations, even at Acts 2:46. Whether the rendering "from house to house" or "in private homes" is used in either of these texts is nothing more than a translator's choice. What ***is*** wrong is to try to make the phrase convey a meaning that is not actually there.

That the apostles and other early Christians visited people in their private homes is clear. That they engaged in door-to-door activity as done by Jehovah's Witnesses today is definitely not clear. It may be claimed, but it is a claim with absolutely no supporting proof.

Not that the Watch Tower Society uses only these texts in its effort to present door-to-door witnessing as the truly Christian and Christ-like way to spread knowledge of God's Word. Another Scripture portion often employed in their arguments is Matthew 10:9-14, in which Jesus gave these instructions on sending out his apostles to preach:

> Into whatever city or village you enter, search out who in it is deserving, and stay there until you leave. When you are entering into the house, greet the household; and if the house is deserving, let the peace you wish it come upon it; but if it is not deserving, let the peace from you return upon you. Wherever anyone does not take you in or listen to your words, on going out of that house or that city shake the dust off your feet.

In Watch Tower publications, emphasis is consistently placed on the expression "Search out who in it [the city or village] is deserving." This is then portrayed as signifying going from door to door to find persons receptive to the good news. Attention is not directed to the words found in the context which say (verse 11): "Stay there until you leave." These words are almost never discussed in Watch Tower publications because they make evident that Jesus was here talking, not about door-to-door witnessing, but about *obtaining lodging*.

Many of these issues came up for discussion by the Governing Body on more than one occasion. The background for this was as follows:

In 1972, when a new organizational manual titled *Organization for Kingdom-Preaching and Disciple-Making* was developed, I was assigned to prepare one-third of the manual, including the chapter titled "Your Service to God." Throughout my life as one of Jehovah's Witnesses I had been active in door-to-door visitation and I continued to be while on the Governing Body and after my resignation in 1980. I endeavored to share in that activity every month of my forty-three years of active association, visiting literally tens of thousands of homes in that time. Any month that I did not engage in that work was a rare exception.[3]

But by 1972, although continuing active in that work, I was no longer convinced that the Scriptures supported the view I had long held, namely, that going from door to door was the distinctively Christian way of declaring the good news. That Christians had a responsibility to share the good news with others was clearly evident, undeniable. And in writing the assigned chapter of the manual I presented that responsibility clearly, as anyone can see by reading the chapter. But I could see nothing in Scripture that ordained a certain method for doing this.

That Christ Jesus and his apostles and disciples had visited people in their homes was likewise clearly evident, undeniable. But that they had gone from door to door in doing so was nowhere indicated in Scripture. I could not conscientiously employ the texts at Acts 5:42 and Acts 20:20 as demanding the view that they did. Thus, in the manual I presented door-to-

3 As mentioned in Chapter 6, page 200, footnote 17, this was not the case with all Governing Body members. With some it was the rare exception if they *did* engage in door-to-door work.

door visitation as an effective means of reaching people, but I did not attempt to present it as something Biblically indicated.

What I wrote was submitted to Karl Adams. Karl read and approved the material and passed it on to the president. The whole manual was subsequently submitted to the Governing Body for discussion. The issue of applying those two texts as relating to calling consecutively at one door after another was discussed at length, pro and con. The chapter was finally approved—unanimously—by the entire Governing Body, then consisting of eleven members.[4]

There the matter rested for several years, during the first three of which Jehovah's Witnesses had some of their greatest numerical increases. Beginning in 1976 there came a severe drop in both numerical growth and in overall activity. There was clear evidence linking this decrease to the fact that the great expectations stimulated by the Watch Tower publications for the year 1975 had failed to materialize.[5] Nonetheless some members of the writing staff now began urging the reintroduction of the use of the texts in Acts as supporting the view that door-to-door activity was "vital" to the preaching of the good news, fundamental to Christianity.[6]

Sam Buck, of the Writing Department staff, submitted an article endeavoring to uphold this view, the article being entitled "How Did Jesus and His Followers Preach?" The Writing Committee of the Governing Body, of which I was a member, discussed it in one of our weekly meetings. Karl Adams, though not a Governing Body member, was present as secretary for the Writing Committee. Among the comments made, Karl's expression was that the article "seemed to be trying to make the Scriptures bend to fit a preconceived idea."

I had previously asked another longtime member of the writing staff to offer his comments on the material submitted.[7] He wrote:

> I get the feeling from the tone of the article that we are trying to make the Scriptures say something we want them to say; we labor the texts to make them say what we want them to say. . . .

4 It should be stated that at that period all decisions had to be unanimous to carry. Later, in 1975,a two-thirds majority rule came into effect. See *Crisis of Conscience* pages 71, 99-101. The only place in the *Organization* manual where Acts 5:42 and Acts 20:20 were discussed was under the topic "Shepherds of the Flock of God," and the portion thereof dealing with visits by elders to the homes of brothers.

5 See *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 198 to 212.

6 Actually, few Witnesses realized that these texts were not being used in that customary way. Karl Adams' brother, Don Adams, though a secretary to the Governing Body, stated that he was unaware of any change in this respect. The evidence from the field was that the decrease was unmistakably tied in with 1975. The fact that, *after the manual was published*, huge increases came right up until 1975 and then sharply dropped off demonstrates this.

7 This man continued as a member of the writing staff. I have no question that he would be concerned if his name were here listed. I also have no question that he continued to hold the same viewpoint as expressed then.

> I think we are missing an important point in all this. Everyone is to praise God, to preach. It is *doing* it that is vital, not *how* it is done. If the early Christians didn't go from house to house, it doesn't mean we must not do so. If they did, it doesn't mean we have to. They went into synagogues, we don't go into churches. We use international conventions, there's no indication that they did. . . . Why force a requirement of one way? Why make a touchstone of "house to house"? The issue is to reach people. The *how* is not important, as long as it is loving and helpful to the people witnessed to.

In the Writing Committee's discussion there was no unanimity among the five members, so the matter went to the entire Governing Body. In the hope that the discussion might focus on, and be governed primarily by, the Scriptures themselves, I made an effort to research all the examples in the four Gospel accounts and the book of Acts relating to any activity that had even a semblance of preaching or "witnessing," and I then reduced my findings down to a chart of twelve pages in length. I also made a comparative chart of 27 translations and their renderings of Acts 2:46; 5:42; and 20:20. A copy of both these charts was supplied to each member of the Governing Body. The chart on the 27 translations is presented below:

	Acts 2:46	Acts 5:42	Acts 20:20
AV	from house to house	in every house	from house to house
ASV	at home	at home	from house to house
Douay	from house to house	from house to house	from house to house
RSV	in their homes	at home	from house to house
NEB	in private houses	in private houses	in your homes
Rotherham	at home	at home	in your homes
Byington	at home	at home	from house to house
Basic Eng	in their houses	privately	privately
Eng Revised	at home	at home	privately
Knox	in this house or that	from house to house	from house to house
New Am St	from house to house	from house to house [mar or in the various private homes]	from house to house [mar or in the various private homes]
Moffatt	in their own homes	at home	from house to house
Moulton	at home	at home	from house to house
New Am Bi	in their houses	at home	in private
Diaglott	at home	at home	at your houses
Goodspeed	in their homes	in private houses	at your houses
Today's Eng Vers	in their homes	in people's homes	in your homes
New International	in their homes	from house to house	from house to house
Philips	in their homes	in people's houses	in your own homes
Jerusalem	in their houses	in private houses	in your homes
Young	at every house	at every house	at every house
New Berkeley	at home	at home	in homes
Syriac	at home	at home	in houses
New New Test (Int.)	from house to house [Interlinear: in [their] houses]	in every house [Int.: in the houses]	from house to house
Barclay	in each other's houses	from house to house	in your own homes
Translators' N T	at home	in people's homes	in your homes
Weymouth	at home	at homes	in your homes

Space does not allow for presenting all twelve pages of the second chart but the first page is presented here as a sample of its contents:

	TEXT	WITNESSING ACTIVITY	LOCATION OR METHOD
	Matt 3:1-6	John's activity	In wilderness, people went to him. (MARK 1:4-5; LUKE 3:3-18; JOHN 1:19-35)
	4:17	Jesus commences	Unspecified (MARK 1:14, 15)
	4:18-22	Calls first disciples	Alongside sea of Galilee (MARK 1:16-20)
	4:23-25	Tour in Galilee	No method described; "great crowds followed him."
	5:1-7:29	Sermon on mount	Talked to crowds on mountainside (LUKE 6:12-49)
	8:1-4	To leper	Account says "crods followed him" and leprous man came to him (LUKE 5:12-16)
	8:5-10	To army officer	Officer came to him,"those following him [Jesus]" also heard
★	8:14-17	Re curing	In Peter's house; "people brought him" those needing cure (MARK 1:29-34; LUKE 4:38-41)
	8:18-22	To scribe	"crowd around him," Jesus ready to go on boat, scribe approaches him
	8:28-34	Re demon-possessed men	Outside city, people turn out to meet Jesus (MARK 5:1-20; LUKE 8:26-39
	9:2-8	Re paralyzed man	Capernaum, people bring to him the paralyzed man (LUKE 5:17-26)
	9:9	Calls Matthew	At Matthew's seat in tax office (MARK 2:14; LUKE 5:27-32)
★	9:10-13	Re tax-collectors and sinners	Reclining at table in [Matthew's] house, people came there (MARK 2:15-17)
	9:14-17	Re fasting	John's disciples "came to him" (MARK 2:18; LUKE 5:33-35)
★	9:18-26	Ruler's daughter and a sick woman	Ruler "approached," woman came up to him, he went into ruler's house (MARK 5:21-43; LUKE 8:40-56)
★	9:27-31	Two blind men	Followed him into the house [evidently house where Jesus stayed in Capernaum] (COMPARE MARK 2:1,2)
★	9:32-34	Re dumb man	People brought man to him in same house
	9:35-38	Tour	Synagogues; account speaks of crowds; methods otherwise not indicated (MARK 6:6, 12, 13)
★	10:1-42	Sends out twelve	No specific methods prescribed; gave instructions regarding caring for needs as to food, clothing money and lodging, showing how to find proper lodging from which to carry out activity; speaks of 'preaching from housetops' but evidently in figurative sense (MARK 3:13-15; 6:7,14,30; LUKE 9:1-6; COMPARE LUKE 9:51-56, 10:5,6, AC 5:16:15, 17:6,7, 24:4,7,8,16, 25:7,14)

In the complete chart of "Witnessing Activity," some 150 *separate incidents* of "witnessing" were listed (where the same incident was reported by more than one of Gospel writers the text citations for all the accounts were generally combined under one incident).

Of the 150 or so incidents recorded in these five Scriptural accounts, only about 34 included any reference to a "house" or

"home." Among these are the four accounts which are most often used in Watch Tower publications as basis for their teaching on door-to-door activity. They are the accounts of Jesus' giving instructions to his twelve apostles and to seventy disciples before sending them out in evangelizing activity, and those two occurrences in the book of Acts where the phrase "from house to house" occurs (in the *New World Translation*). Since the whole question at issue was *what these four accounts actually described*—that is, whether they were to be understood as relating to going from one door to the next or not—then certainly *the other thirty accounts* where the word "house" or "home" occurred should have been of serious interest, for they would reasonably cast light on the way in which Jesus and his apostles and disciples conducted their activity. What did those remaining accounts reveal? As I pointed out to the Governing Body members, the chart showed that:

> 21 refer either to homes where Jesus, Peter or Paul *lodged* or to homes where they were *invited*, often for a meal, including the homes of Martha, Mary and Lazarus, Zacchaeus, Simon the Tanner, Cornelius, Lydia, a jailer in Philippi, Aquila and Priscila, Titius Justus, and Publius.
>
> 7 accounts refer to unidentified houses but the context indicates either a place of *lodging* or a place of *gathering*, at times all twelve apostles or even a great crowd being present.
>
> 2 relate to Jesus' sending a healed person off to his home.

In all the accounts, *there is not a single instance that shows Jesus or any of his apostles or disciples calling from one door to the next door or even going from one house to another house*.

Perhaps this is the reason that, despite its completeness, the chart was not even discussed by the Governing Body, aside from one or two indirect references to it.

Instead the discussion focused mainly on the use of the phrase "house to house" found in the familiar two texts in the *New World Translation* of the book of Acts. Lloyd Barry urged a return to the use of these texts to support the door-to-door work, pointing out that 'this is the way the organization has carried on the work down through the years.' (This is, clearly, nothing other than an appeal to tradition.) Leo Greenlees stressed that 'we must have an organized way for covering the territories' (every congregation divides up its local assigned area into "territories" of a few hundred homes each). Albert Schroeder read some quotations on the use of the

Greek preposition *kata* and also cited the examples of public witnessing done by the Lollards, followers of Wycliffe. George Gangas said 'the vast majority of persons who had come into the organization were contacted by going from door to door.[8] Carey Barber spoke of the attitude of elders who questioned the Scriptural basis for door-to-door work, saying that 'they evidently do not feel it necessary to be zealous in this work.' He referred to Acts 20:21 as showing that Paul had talked to persons about "repentance," arguing that this indicated that his house-to-house work (referred to in verse 20) was done among strangers, not disciples. He cited the expression of one woman, a Witness, who said of the door-to-door work, "What am I doing out here if I don't **have** to preach?" Lyman Swingle said that 'evidently the one who wrote the proposed article wanted to have a "command" to go from door to door, something which he (Swingle) did not feel the Scriptures warranted.' Karl Klein stated that we are 'under obligation to use the best possible means for preaching,' and cited the example of the "man with the writer's inkhorn" in the prophet Ezekiel's vision and his putting a mark on the forehead of persons.[9] He said that 'the brothers who discipline themselves and have love will go from house to house.' Milton Henschel warned that 'some elders were saying that there is "no scriptural backing for house-to-house work,"' and, with considerable force, he added that 'he himself was not in Ephesus but that Luke ***was*** and that Luke states that Paul went from "house to house."' Also that 'our business is to make disciples and the brothers should be encouraged to go from door to door.' He suggested quoting some of the U. S. Supreme Court decisions that speak about the practice of going to homes of people uninvited as an age-old method of preaching. Secretary-Treasurer Grant Suiter said that 'if anything has been published detracting from the house-to-house work then a special committee should be appointed to consider it.' He said that there were a number of

8 In reality, there is strong evidence that only a *minority* of Witnesses became such as the result of a visit to their doors. I have asked groups of persons by what means they became Witnesses and, in each case, out of perhaps a dozen persons only one or two had first been interested through that means. The majority were interested by family members, workmates, acquaintances and similar contacts. Reports by circuit overseers have presented similar evidence. One of the elders quoted in Chapter 6, in his response to the Society stated, "In more and more territories it is possible to go from door to door for literally hours and talk to no one. . . . It seems increasingly clear that most of the increase is coming from informal witnessing efforts rather than from door to door." (Letter from Worth Thornton.)

9 See Ezekiel 9:3-11. The organization's claim is that the only way this symbolic man could have accomplished the task was by going from door to door. (See the *Watchtower*, May 15, 1981, page 11.) In effect, it pretends to know just how things *must* have been done some 25 centuries in the past. The Scriptures themselves say nothing of any method.

reports indicating that some Witnesses were not carrying literature with them when they go from door to door. He said that 'there are a lot of people who would like to be Jehovah's Witnesses but that they don't like to witness' and that elders should not be of that kind.[10] Lloyd Barry again spoke, quoting a Catholic priest's comment about the good example of Jehovah's Witnesses in going from door to door. He quoted a member of the Branch Committee in Panama as saying that house-to-house work is "the very backbone of our worship." Leo Greenlees also spoke again saying that most of the brothers are "disorganized personally" and would not do the work if the organization did not make arrangements for them.

That is a résumé, of the bulk of the discussion and illustrates the pattern it took, the attitudes and thinking manifest. I made consistent attempts to draw attention to the Scriptures themselves throughout the session but the discussion rarely stayed on any one point long enough for any thorough consideration. Any Biblical discussion focused almost entirely on the rightness of the translation "from house to house," as found at Acts 5:42; 20:20, in the *New World Translation*, President Fred Franz in particular defending this.

In reality, neither I nor anyone else had rejected or even criticized that rendering. The real question was, what did "house to house" there *mean*? Was it synonymous with "door to door" as employed by Witnesses? Or did it simply have the same sense as "in private homes," as the *New World Translation* rendered the identical Greek phrase at Acts 2:46? I had called attention to this at various points in the discussion. Since Fred Franz was in fact the translator of the *New World Translation*, I was sure that he realized that this same Greek phrase (*kat'oikon*) was also used four times to refer to the meeting place of Christian believers at certain disciples' homes. (See *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation* at Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; and Philemon verse 2.) In these verses he had rendered the Greek phrase by such renderings as "in their house," "at her house," and "in your house." While the preposition *kata* is clearly not used in

10 In contrast with these strong statements, of all the Governing Body members, Grant Suiter was probably the one who most rarely engaged in door-to-door activity. One Writing Department member who belonged to the same congregation as Suiter and was assigned to the same "study group," said that in years of attending meetings for field service he had never seen him present. Suiter's wife, in personal conversation with my wife, expressed how difficult she found it to be a "regular publisher" (which requires only one hour a month), saying that they went out on speaking engagements so many weekends and that while Grant got to report his time giving talks to the congregations, she could not report even that.

a "distributive" sense in these texts, nonetheless they illustrate that the phrase was used in reference to the private homes *of disciples*.

So, in an effort to bring home the point that—no matter what way the phrase was rendered—the decisive question was whether it clearly conveyed the *meaning* that was being assigned to it, I finally felt impelled to ask a direct question of my uncle, saying: "Does Brother Fred Franz really believe that the phrase 'from house to house' as found in these verses [Acts 5:42; 20:20] actually means going 'from door to door,' from one door to the next door? I would appreciate his expressing himself on that."

The chairman, Karl Klein, turned to him and said, "Well, Brother Franz?" His reply began with, "Yes—I believe it can include that." (Note the use of the word "can," not "does.") He then went on to say, "For example, on going to a home Paul might have entered in the front door and, after his discussion, he might have gone out the back door, and so he would be going from door to door." A number of the members broke out in laughter. But the fact was that the statement was not meant to provoke laughter—it was made in all seriousness. I say this not simply because of then having known my uncle for more than half a century, and knowing his manner of speaking when he is being deliberately humorous, sarcastic or even facetious. This was not an offhand remark made in casual conversation. The Society's president knew the question was directed to the central issue which had initiated the long discussion. He spoke both deliberately and with a tone appealing to reason, and he gave not the slightest indication of intending or expecting his explanation to be taken in any other way than as a reasonable one. I felt stunned, for it seemed incredible that such a reply could be made as in any way clarifying the central issue of a discussion that had by then already been hours in length. In conversation, Karl Klein had once remarked, "Freddie can rationalize *anything*." Yet I still puzzle at how an obviously intelligent man could offer such an evasive rationalization, one sufficiently farfetched to produce laughter from his fellow Body members. But it was the only answer my question received.

I had asked the members of the Body to consider the twelve pages of Scriptural evidence and to point out anything whatsoever indicating that Jesus ever, at any time, set an example of going from door to door. This, too, went unanswered.

Shortly after my question to Fred Franz, the Governing Body voted to have Lloyd Barry oversee the writing of material that would reintroduce the use of the earlier-mentioned texts as spe-

cifically supporting the door-to-door activity carried on by Jehovah's Witnesses. The vote was thirteen in favor, four not in favor.

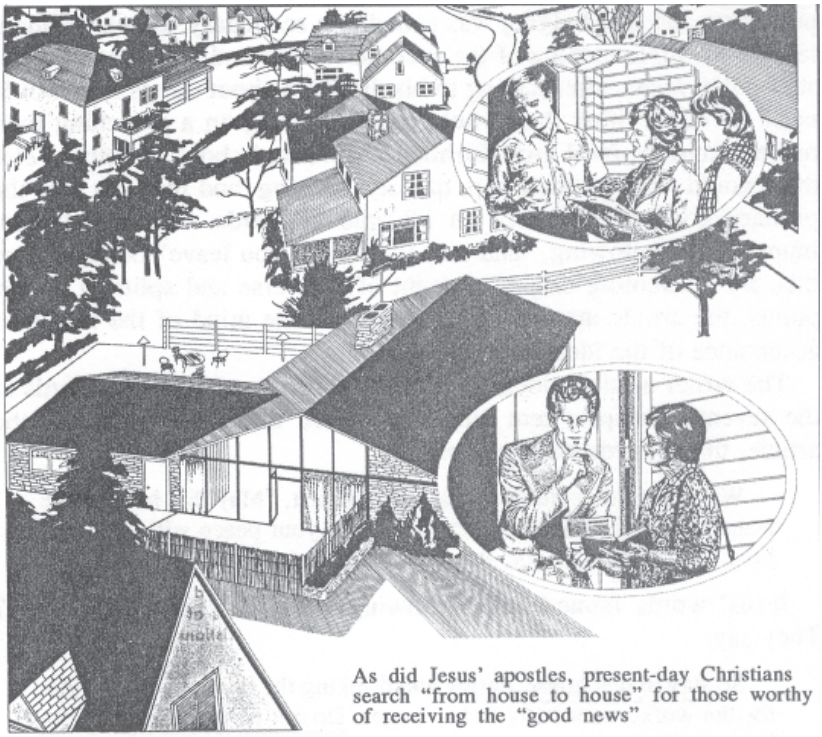
I found the discussion disheartening. It was not that the vote cast was in any way unexpected. The disheartening factor was the manner and spirit in which the discussion itself had proceeded—although the wandering, haphazard pattern it followed was something previous experience should also have caused me to expect. Afterward I took time to put some comments in written form to give to all the members, but after writing the material I wondered what the use would be of trying further. It seemed an exercise in futility. I ended up giving out only four copies or so, sending these to those members that I thought might at least give the material consideration and I filed the rest.

Making Scripture Fit an Organizational Teaching

When Governing Body member Lloyd Barry was assigned to see that material was prepared on the subject for the *Watchtower*, he voluntarily stated before the Body that he would make sure that due consideration was given to the information presented in the two charts (of Biblical evidence concerning witnessing in the four Gospels and Acts, and of the ways in which *kat'oikon* was rendered in various translations) which I had supplied to the Body members. He chose to write the material himself and this eventually appeared in the July 15, 1979 *Watchtower* (the same issue that carried the article on Nancy Yuen, her door-to-door activity and her twenty years in prison). It contained no consideration whatsoever of the supplied Biblical evidence nor, in fact, did it give any consideration to the basic issues involved as discussed in the Governing Body session.

At their beginning the articles carried a large picture of houses with insets depicting Witnesses calling at the doors and at the bottom the words: "As did Jesus' apostles, present-day Christians search 'from house to house' for those worthy of receiving the good news." Thus, from the beginning, "house to house" and "door to door" were equated. Nowhere in the article was proof given that this is the case in Scripture; that side of the question was not even discussed.

The articles that followed illustrate clearly the way in which, with distressing frequency, the organization presents a slanted picture of matters to its members, suppressing all unfavorable evidence and thus depriving its members of the opportunity to assess issues fairly and arrive at a personal conclusion as to the validity of positions taken.



As did Jesus' apostles, present-day Christians search "from house to house" for those worthy of receiving the "good news"

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Since no evidence could be presented that Jesus ever set an example of going from house to house in the sense of visiting consecutive houses door to door, the focus of the first article was placed instead on his instructions to the twelve apostles and the seventy disciples. (Pages 9 and 10 of the first article.) It followed the standard practice of presenting only those parts of the text that speak of 'searching out who is deserving,' and omitting the phrases that accompany those words, such as "stay there until you leave," "stay in that house, eating and drinking the things they provide. . . . Do not be transferring from house to house." (Paragraphs 8-10) After quoting only part of Jesus' words, the article then goes on to say:

> This would necessitate their going to the people's homes, where "deserving" persons would heed the "good news." In this way, those disciples would also find lodging for the night.

Note, "would *also* find lodging." This serves to give the idea that this part of Jesus' instructions dealt primarily with door-to-door

preaching and that lodging was something secondary, almost incidental. Yet a simple reading of the account (in this and the other gospels) shows that Jesus, after talking to his disciples about things they would need, or might think they would need, in going on a preaching tour, namely, money, food and clothing, then talked about something else they would need on their trip, namely, lodging, and that this was the primary concern discussed in his quoted words. Jesus' statement immediately following, "and stay there until you leave" demonstrates this. By its quoting only a segment of the verse and splitting up the points, the article more easily manipulates the mind of the reader to acceptance of the ideas advanced.[11]

The writer used the identical method when quoting Jesus' words to the seventy disciples sent out, as recorded at Luke 10:1-16. In the article, these words were quoted:

> Wherever you enter into a house say first, "May this house have peace." And if a friend of peace is there, your peace will rest upon him. But if there is not, it will turn back to you.

Jesus' next words were not quoted. Why not? They say:

> So <u>stay in that house</u>, eating and drinking the things they provide, for the worker is worthy of his wages. <u>Do not be transferring from house to house</u>.

These words show that Jesus clearly was telling these disciples how to go about obtaining lodging with suitable persons and how to conduct themselves once such lodging was obtained. Since these words give a totally different cast to the picture, they were not convenient to the writer's argument. So, they simply were not considered.

When the matter of translation was brought into the picture, the article briefly acknowledged that "there are other renderings" than "house to house" for *kat'oikon*, but then presented *only those translations that use that rendering!* It never addressed the issue of whether "distributive" means or requires the idea of "consecutive."

In a footnote it listed eighteen translations that contain the phrase "from house to house" at Acts 20:20. It did not tell the reader that there are *equally as many translations* that give other renderings, such as "privately," "in private homes," "at home," and

11 The article also draws a "red herring" across the trail by saying (page 10), "Whether they went to the synagogues or marketplaces, the record does not say. But they *were* instructed to go to the houses of the people." This serves to divert attention from the real issue, which is whether Jesus was giving instructions on "witnessing methods" or was giving instructions as to obtaining lodging. The disciples *already knew* how Jesus "witnessed" for they had been with him and observed his example. Their *own accounts* (such as those of Matthew and John) say *nothing* of his going from house to house but *do* relate his speaking in synagogues, marketplaces and other public places and of his accepting invitations to particular homes and speaking to people present there.

similar renderings. It did not tell the reader that some of the same translations listed as using "house to house" at Acts 20:20, render *kat'oikon* as "at home" in Acts 5:42. (*American Standard Version; Revised Standard Version; English Revised Version; Moffatt's translation*.) It included the *New American Standard Version* in its footnote list of versions using "from house to house" at Acts 20:20 but did not point out that its marginal reading is "or in the various private homes." Anything on these points that did not lend itself to the idea the articles were designed to promote was simply ignored. Yet the writer, Lloyd Barry, knew that this had been a serious and crucial point of discussion in the Governing Body session.

Most difficult to understand is why the articles nowhere acknowledged the fact that the organization's own *New World Translation* renders *kat'oikon* as "in private homes" at Acts 2:46. *That verse is not even mentioned in the entire presentation.* Why not? The reason seems evident.

The first article laid the foundation and the remaining two built on it, calling upon historians (E. Arnold and H. G. Wells, who wrote about the evangelistic spirit of early Christianity), the organization's own traditional use of door-to-door witnessing, court decisions and other material as support for the viewpoint presented.

The articles thus present a notable example of suppression of contrary evidence, of "circular reasoning" where unproved premises are built upon as if they were fact. Written in forceful, colorful language, with statements made in a positive, confident way, the articles give the reader no indication whatever that there could be an alternative understanding of the scriptural accounts called on for support of the traditional position. In view of the Governing Body's discussion and the evidence presented there, it is difficult to view this as anything other than intellectual dishonesty.

The Apostle Paul's Record of Witnessing

Examples of this ignoring or suppressing of evidence could be multiplied. As just one of many, the December 1, 1982, *Watchtower* contained a discussion of the apostle Paul's service and quoted his words at Acts 20:20, 21. Consider the assertion that follows this (page 13):

> Later, he could appropriately say to the "older men" of the Ephesus congregation: "I did not hold back from telling you any of the things that were profitable nor from teaching you publicly and from house to house. But I thoroughly bore witness both to Jews and Greeks about repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus." (Acts 20:17, 20, 21, 31: 19:1-4) So, then, before these men who were now elders had become Christians, the apostle Paul had taught them the basic truths of Christianity in the "house to house" preaching activity.

Paul himself speaks of teaching these men *first* "publicly" and *then* teaching them from "house to house." The writer of the article in effect inverts the order, flatly asserting that the 'house-to-house' feature was the *initial* means whereby the Ephesian elders had become Christians. He simply passes over completely the part Paul's "public" teaching played in instructing these men in "the basic truths of Christianity," even though Paul himself lists this first. On what possible basis could the writer do this? Where do Paul's words even specify the *location* of these men's repenting and placing faith in Jesus Christ, thereby becoming Christians? In reality, in the chapter just preceding the one quoted (that is, in Acts chapter nineteen) the Bible itself tells us about Paul's actual activity in Ephesus. Since, as Milton Henschel put it, 'we were not in Ephesus and Luke was,' what does Luke's own account (as the writer of the book of Acts) show as to *how* and *where* Paul "thoroughly bore witness both to Jews and Greeks" about repentance and faith in Christ?

Acts chapter nineteen shows that, upon arriving in Ephesus, Paul "found some disciples," about twelve, who did not know about receiving the gift of the Spirit or about being baptized in the name of Christ, having been baptized in John's baptism. Paul baptized them in the name of Jesus. But it must be noted that these men were already "believers," "disciples," when he found them. He taught them, not as uninformed strangers, but as men who were already disciples.

Their case can be compared to that of Apollos, described in the preceding chapter as having been "acquainted with only the baptism of John" when Aquila and Priscilla came to know him. (Acts 18:24-26) Yet, even before they "expounded the way of God more correctly to him," Apollos had already been "speaking and teaching with correctness the things about Jesus" in the synagogue. Though incomplete in his understanding, he was nonetheless already a Christian when Aquila and Priscilla met him. Furthermore, they met him, not going from door to door, but while themselves attending the synagogue. There is no evident reason for viewing the twelve men at Ephesus differently.

After describing the baptism of these men by Paul, the account in Acts chapter nineteen goes on to say:

> Entering into the synagogue, he [Paul] spoke with boldness for three months, giving talks and using persuasion concerning the kingdom of God. But when some went on hardening themselves and not believing, speaking injuriously about The Way before the multitude, he withdrew from them and separated the disciples from them, daily giving talks in the school auditorium of Tyrannus.

This is Luke's eyewitness account about Paul's ministry at Ephesus. He shows that some of those listening to Paul's talks in the synagogue during those three months either already were or eventually became disciples. He does not say that the embracing of Christianity by any of these, or of any others, was the result of "house-to-house preaching activity." A very broad background of Scriptural evidence indicates that this was most likely the result of listening to Paul's *public talks in the synagogue*. Consider that evidence as presented in Luke's account:

Throughout the book of Acts (written by Luke) there is instance after instance of persons *becoming believers* as a result of talks given in a public place or public manner. The 3,000 at Pentecost gathered *publicly* to hear Peter and the other disciples speak and *that very day* they repented and became believers. They were not responding to the call of someone at the door of their house. (Acts 2:1-41) While it is true that Cornelius and his associates heard the message of repentance and faith in Christ at Cornelius' house, Peter's visit there was not in connection with any "house-to-house preaching activity" but a *specific visit* to that *one home*. (Acts 10:24-48) At Antioch in Pisidia, as a result of Paul's speaking *in the synagogue* certain ones, Jews and proselytes, "*followed* Paul and Barnabas" so as to hear more. (Acts 13:14-16, 38-43) If any *house* was involved, it was most likely one in which Paul and Barnabas were lodged, with these interested persons visiting him at such house, the reverse of being visited at their doors by Paul and Barnabas. (Compare a similar situation in Jesus' ministry at John 1:35-39.) The following sabbath, "all those who were rightly disposed for everlasting life became believers"—*in the synagogue* from all indications. (Acts 13:44-48) In Iconium, the account says that Paul and Barnabas again spoke *in the synagogue* and that "a great multitude of both Jews and Greeks *became believers." They* 'repented and put faith in Christ' as the result of public teaching in the synagogue with no mention of any "house-to-house preaching activity." (Acts 14:1) At Philippi, Lydia 'opened her heart and responded

to Paul's message,' but this was *by a river* and Paul entered her house only afterward, and then as her guest.[12] The Philippian jailer who was later converted became acquainted with Paul s a prisoner *in his jail* and Paul's entry into his house came as a result of the jailer's request for knowledge, not due to any unsolicited visit to his door. (Acts 16:12-15, 25-34) In Thessalonica, the result of Paul's reasoning with the people *in the synagogue* for three sabbaths was that "some of them *became believers* and associated themselves with Paul and Silas, and a great multitude of the Greeks who worshiped God" also did so--again, public teaching in a synagogue with no mention of any "house-to-house" preaching activity. (Acts 17:1-4) In Beroea, upon arrival they "went *into the synagogue* of the Jews" and "many of them *became believers*, and so did not a few of the reputable Greek women and of the men." (Acts 17:10-12) In Athens, after Paul had spoken publicly in the *synagogue*, the *marketplace* and at the *Areopagus*, all *public places*, some "joined themselves to him and *became believers*." (Acts 17:16-34) In Corinth, Paul, while lodging in the home of Aquila and Priscilla, "would give a talk *in the synagogue* every sabbath and would persuade Jews and Greeks." When opposition forced him out of the synagogue he went next door to the house of Titius Justus and used this house as a place of teaching, and the account says, "But Crispus the presiding officer of the synagogue became a believer in the Lord, and so did all his household. And many of the Corinthians that heard began to believe and be baptized." (Acts 18:1-8) Crispus and his family had initially heard the good news in the synagogue and only later in their home when used as a gathering place, with no door-to-door visitation entering the picture.

All these accounts precede the account of Paul's activity in Ephesus. Are we to think they shed no light on Paul's statement quoted in the *Watchtower* from Acts 20:21, that he "thoroughly bore witness both to Jews and to Greeks about repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus"? Where had Paul done exactly that in these many accounts? Was it in some form of door-to-door activity? Or was it instead in public places, principally synagogues? When homes were involved, had the apostle gone there in door-to-door activity, or had he in each case been invited to that specific home? Had people, "Jews and Greeks," *repented and become Christians* through public teaching in synagogues? Clearly, they had. In the face of all this evidence from the Scriptures themselves, from the words of Luke as an earwitness, how could the *Watch-*

12 This situation illustrates remarkably well what could have been the case earlier with Jesus' disciples in their preaching tours, as they applied his instruction about staying in the homes of 'worthy persons.'

tower writer not give even the slightest mention of the evident probability that what had happened elsewhere had also happened in Ephesus? Did he not research the matter? Was he not aware of all this evidence? Such superficiality would be unworthy of one writing for millions of readers. Or did he prefer to pass over the mass of evidence so as to make the scriptures fit the Watch Tower organization's teachings? This would be even less excusable.

Paul says he taught persons in Ephesus "publicly and from house to house." If the first method is public, the second, reasonably, is private. Seen against the broad and detailed background of the whole book of Acts, the case at Ephesus clearly may have been that Paul found believers as a result of speaking in the synagogue and, later, in the school of Tyrannus, and that he *thereafter* went to the homes of such believers, from one home to another home, giving them, not public instruction, but private, personalized instruction. Honest argumentation would at the very least acknowledge this as a possibility, and, *if weight is given to all the preceding scriptural examples*, give recognition to this as the most likely explanation. The *Watchtower* does not do this. Why?

I believe that at least one reason is concern over the effect such a fair consideration of the Scriptural evidence might produce. The Governing Body members certainly realize that the extent of the door-to-door activity engaged in by the organization's worldwide membership is in large measure due to constant pressuring, in magazines, in weekly meetings, in talks by traveling overseers. Though their own privileged position allows them a degree of immunity from that pressure, they surely know from their past experience before entering the leadership that they felt it and that the pressure is real.[13] Their own expressions, as for example in the matter of reporting, evidence a real fear that letting up on the pressure will result in a drop in that activity. Leo Greenlees' comment that most of the brothers are "disorganized" and need the Society's arrangements to get them to do the work, typifies the

13 This degree of immunity extends in some measure to others in upper levels of the administration. In a letter to the Service Committee, dated December 29, 1976, the secretary to that committee, Robert Wallen, cites a case in the Woodhaven congregation (with which he associated) in which the circuit overseer spoke against eldership for a man averaging about five hours a month in "field service." Wallen points out that the man had served in another congregation as an elder, was recommended by that congregation, and also that he had two pre-school-age children. He said the case caused him to think seriously about his own situation, since his time in service averaged "about the same as this brother." Yet he went on to say that because of his assignment at the headquarters his qualification as an elder was judged by a different standard than this man's. (See the quotation from his letter on pages 199, 200.) Though true of those with assignments of some prominence, this immunity does not extend to the average worker at headquarters, and he enjoys no relief from pressure for field service hours.

paternalistic viewpoint so often expressed in Governing Body sessions. Though dealing with another facet of the organization's program—a suggestion about reducing the length of time of the weekly meetings—a quite similar comment was expressed by Milton Henschel who asked, "And what will the brothers do if we give them more free time? Probably use it in watching TV."

Whether they consciously think of it in this connection, the men in positions of leadership also know that the Watch Tower organization has produced a publishing empire of tremendous size, one that has taken decades to build up. That publishing system with its large, expensive branch offices and printeries and the impressive, multi-storied dwellings for those operating these, are a source of considerable pride and a frequently cited evidence of divine blessing and prosperity. Any diminishing of the pressure on Witnesses to engage in door-to-door activity with the publications flowing from that system could eventually cause the empire to crumble or require its being largely dismantled. I seriously believe that for many of those in the organizational leadership, the very idea of this is unthinkable.

The Governing Body members also realize that, although an enormous volume of millions of publications goes out every year, only a small fraction of those publications is ever read. But the sheer size of the output helps support the impression of a tremendous "worldwide witness" given to the people. Whereas the apostle Paul "taught" publicly *and* in private homes, the door-to-door work of Jehovah's Witnesses in most countries where their work is carried on is a very public form of preaching but *not of teaching*. Even the extent of the "preaching" is notably small. In most countries, the Witness only occasionally engages in any substantial conversation, even less frequently getting past the doorstep. In a large percentage of cases the "witnessing" involves no more than a quick offering of some Watch Tower publications. Even in the minority of cases where people allow the Witness to say more, or invite him or her into the house, what is said in the vast majority of cases could hardly be described as "teaching" and would not even remotely qualify as a 'bearing of thorough witness about repentance and faith in the Lord,' for it consists primarily and principally of a very brief consideration of one or two Bible verses

followed by the offer of Watch Tower literature.[14] Whatever actual "teaching" is done is to be found in the "home Bible studies" conducted, and anyone familiar with the situation in the congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses must know that only a small minority of them participate in such Bible study activity.

An article titled "The House-to-House Challenge" in the May 15, 1981 *Watchtower* earlier referred to, presents an attractive picture of the benefits of engaging in door-to-door work. It states that there is "nothing like the house-to-house method of evangelizing to help one to cultivate the fruits of God's holy spirit," that it "helps one to cultivate the virtue of humility," that it "tends to make one more sympathetic, more empathetic," and that it "serves as a protection from the world." It is probably true that any activity that takes one out among people, including many forms of social work, can have a positive effect on one's outlook and attitude toward people. But the picture presented is more fancy than fact, and I believe that most Witnesses, who regularly rub shoulders with elders and pioneers, and have contact with circuit and district overseers, know that door-to-door work of itself does very, very little to make for better, more sympathetic people who manifest in notable degree love, patience, long-suffering, mildness and the other fruits of the Spirit. The *Watchtower*'s glowing description is more representative of wishful thinking than of reality, as letters written by the organization's own respected elders have demonstrated. As to feelings of empathy, the very fact that Witnesses are trained to think of the people they visit as worldlings, to discount any profession of spirituality on their part as not genuinely Christian, and to view only those few who respond as being "sheeplike," certainly hinders any truly empathetic feelings. Their interest in the people is largely a channeled interest and their view one of tunnel vision. Even though the person met is suffering due to severe problems and needs, rarely will the Witness concern himself or herself with anything other than seeking to place literature or making a convert. Where either of these things seems

14 The letter quoted earlier from the South African Branch Committee includes statements that are true of most countries, saying that "few of the public really read our magazines," "many publishers pay for the magazines and distribute only a portion of what they get," and finally asking, "What is the point of distributing millions of magazines without accomplishing our real purpose for doing so?"

unlikely, most exemplify the course of the Levite and the priest of the parable; few respond like the good Samaritan.

It is similar with claims of the ability of door-to-door activity to nurture humility and the fruitage of the Spirit. During the years I served as Branch overseer in the Caribbean I saw a remarkable amount of tension and difficulties in the many missionary homes set up by the organization. It seemed a constant problem to attain any satisfactory degree of compatibility among many of these men and women who were called on to live together as small groups in the same house. We regularly made change after change, shifting persons from one missionary home to another in an effort to achieve an atmosphere of peace rather than dissension. In one part of the Caribbean where I served, the Branch later set up a special home for certain of the missionaries who had served longest there. The reason was simply that they did not seem able to get along with others, with some (in those homes where they were) pleading for relief and saying that their lives were being made miserable by the attitudes and ways of these missionaries. In one South American country to which I was sent as zone overseer, the one remaining missionary home was at the branch office building. The home was occupied by persons who all had spent decades in full time service. The atmosphere of complaint and petty differences, however, was such that, after years of doing his best to cope with the self-centeredness, the branch coordinator finally asked and received permission to move out and live elsewhere, though still continuing his work as the branch coordinator. Yet in all the cases cited these were people who were, or had been, daily spending five or more hours in witnessing and much of this in "the house-to-house evangelizing."

Despite all evidence, the organization's publications continue regularly to depict any questioning of its door-to-door program as the result of a lack of humility and a lack of faith and love for God and others. Thus, the December 1, 1987, *Watchtower* (page 20) states:

> . . . For those who lose the fear of Jehovah, meetings, field service [door-to-door witnessing], and other Christian activities could become a burden.
>
> Notice how such ones were described in the *Watchtower* of January 1, 1937: "To those unfaithful ones the privilege

SINCERE persons are watching with great fear and trepidation the feverish preparations for war among the nations. Hatred, malice and ill will daily increase. That a terrible world disaster is impending seems certain and is sensed by almost everyone.

Is there to be found a place of

SAFETY?

The man who by reason of world-wide travel, research, and knowledge of God's sure Word of Prophecy is qualified to answer authoritatively is

JUDGE RUTHERFORD

He will answer in a public lecture to be delivered at the

COLISEUM

of the

OHIO STATE FAIR GROUNDS

Sunday, September 19, 12 noon

Eastern Standard Time

Free lecture — No collection

For list of stations in nation-wide broadcast of speech see reverse side

Handbill from 1937, advertising one of "Judge" Rutherford's lectures.

> of serving God by bringing the fruits of the kingdom before others, as the Lord has commanded, has become only a tiresome ceremony and formality, which offers them no opportunity to shine in the eyes of men. The carrying of the kingdom message from house to house in printed form, and presenting this to the people, is too humiliating for such self-important ones.". . . This is what can happen when we lose our fear of Jehovah and, along with it, our love for him.

This would make it appear that no one could possibly question the rightness of the enormous importance placed on the door-to-door method by the Watch Tower organization and do so for sincere and conscientious reasons, based on a study of God's Word and the evidence it forcefully presents. It implies that any doing so must be unfaithful to God, concerned about 'shining in the eyes of men,' self-important, and having lost their fear of Jehovah and their love for him.

It is worth remembering that this quoted 1937 article (as with all "study articles" of that time) was written by Judge Rutherford who himself took no part in door-to-door activity. His own associates state that he viewed the work he did as of greater importance. He was not only the man whose voice was on all the phonograph recordings Witnesses then carried to the doors (those recordings being the only way in which Rutherford, vicariously, went from door to door), but who also gave all the principal speeches at any assembly, whose picture was carried on all advertisements of such occasions, with his name always prefaced by the title "Judge," and often along with reference to his being the corporation president and a member of the New York Bar association. This, then, was the writer who presumed to impute self-importance and a desire to shine to any who did not vigorously support the door-to-door activity he urged, but from which he viewed himself as exempt.

I believe that a heavy responsibility accompanies the one-sided, slanted argumentation used to shore up the organizational claim that door-to-door activity is Biblically taught and advocated, and that it was a distinctive method of first-century witnessing. It is not a matter of mere academic discussion and debate over technical points. It has an impact on people's lives, on the way they view themselves and view others.

The organizationally-promoted door-to-door method has clearly been converted into a standard by which the spirituality of others and their love of God is judged. Surely any teaching which carries that consequence deserves a more genuine argumentation than is to be found in the organization's publications, a fuller, fairer consideration of the evidence and issues involved.

What the Scriptures show as to the true meaning of the preaching of the "good news of the kingdom" will be discussed in a later chapter.

8

Legalism–Opponent of Christian Freedom

You are not under law but under undeserved kindness.—Romans 6:14.

[They] attempted to tie us up with rules and regulations.—Galatians 2:4, *Phillips Modern English.*

LEGALISM HAS been a major obstacle to genuine Christianity from the earliest of times. It was already manifest when Jesus appeared as God's Sent-One, the Messiah. It particularly dominated the thinking of the group known as the "Pharisees." That name means "the separated ones," and as one reference work states, "There is much to be said for the view that the group received their name through understanding themselves as the fellowship which embodied the true Israel and distancing themselves from the rest of the nation."[1]

Historically the fellowship of the Pharisees was born in pre-Christian times as part of a movement that had an essentially noble goal: to encourage religious devotion and obedience to God's Law (the Torah), a course then being threatened by growing Greek influence. Such "Hellenization" had, from the time of Alexander the Great's conquest of Israel, been steadily encroaching upon the thinking, practices and daily life of the Jewish nation. The Pharisees believed that a return to full obedience to the God-given Law was vital in order to prepare for the coming of the Messiah. Consequently they claimed to be ardent supporters and defenders of the purity of the worship of God; Jesus himself acknowledged that they had a degree of righteousness.—Matthew 5:20.

In the end, however, they wound up being among the prime opposers of the Messiah at his coming. No other group came in for such strong and repeated censure from Christ. Their concern for demonstrating loyalty to God and his law had turned into

1 *Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol.. II, page 810.

legalism, a legalism that caused them to become narrow and rigid and to lose sight of those things which are the most vital, including justice, mercy, faithfulness and love of neighbor. (Matthew 12:1-14; 23:23) They were intensely concerned about avoiding anything that could make them "unclean" before God. They sought to "make a fence around the Law," ostensibly as a protection against anyone's overstepping it and transgressing.[2] To accomplish this they "set out to comment, analyze, and interpret Torah [the Law] to meet every possible case and contingency of life with an industry and persistence that would have done credit to medieval schoolmen. The result was a subtle and intricate web of case-law, which was also a terrible drag on ordinary human existence."[3] Jesus described it as the 'laying of heavy burdens on men's shoulders,' burdens that the religious leaders would not budge with one of their fingers. (Matthew 23:4) Ultimately their zeal for ruling on all possible applications of the Law brought them into conflict with God's Word, as the traditions they developed in applying that Law resulted in nullifying the more vital principles of that Word. (Matthew 15:1-9) Their extreme focus on law inevitably caused them to become self-righteous, priding themselves on their superior obedience and their various abstentions. As a result they became judgmental of others who did not measure up to their standards and adhere to the interpretations of law they developed and the program of routine acts of piety they performed. They "trusted in themselves that they were righteous and . . . considered the rest as nothing."[4]

I believe that ancient pattern can be seen in modern times, with virtually identical results.

A Great Body of Law Developed

The Watch Tower's publications have often spoken in very negative terms about the development among the Jews of a Talmud based on rabbinical interpretations of the Mosaic Law. Yet over the past four decades the organization has developed its own body of law, one of remarkable extent and complexity. This has all been done in the name of "keeping the congregation clean" and "separate from the world," thereby assuring its righteousness before God. The organization itself acknowledges the existence of such law.

2 See the *Watchtower* May 1, 1980, page 6.
3 W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Fortress Press, Philadelphia), 1984, pages 24, 25.
4 Luke 18:1-14, compare John :49.

Thus, in an article titled "Do You Belittle Discipline?" under the subheading "Disciplined Every Step of the Way," the *Watchtower* stressed the role of the "New World society" (a once popular name for describing the Witness organization) in supplying such discipline and said:

> So it is that by the New World society's application of the stated Scriptural commands, examples, rules and principles to the issues and problems of life, a great body of theocratic law is being built up.[5]

That "great body of theocratic law" has become far greater during the three decades since that article was written. Clearly, this is not merely a matter of taking direct statements from Scripture, for in that case it would not be described as a 'building up' of a great body of "theocratic law." The `building up' results from the *interpreting* of such Scriptural statements, *enlarging* upon them, *extending* them into more and more detailed application "to the issues and problems of life," not merely as a form of exposition or exhortation but with the interpretations themselves now becoming "theocratic law."

It is not necessary for such rules of conduct or action to be specifically called "laws" for them to be laws. As we have seen, law is rightly defined as "*a binding custom or practice of a community: a rule of conduct or action prescribed or formally recognized as binding or enforced by a controlling authority*." Law contrasts with a "precept" since law "*implies imposition by a sovereign authority and the obligation of obedience on the part of all subject to that authority*," whereas precept "*commonly suggests something advisory and not obligatory communicated typically through teaching*."[6]

While believing they are no longer under Mosaic Law, the evidence is that Jehovah's Witnesses have come under another law, submitting to it; having come to believe that their righteousness is firmly tied to keeping it.

Replacing One System of Legal Control with Another

That is the way matters are presented in another Watch Tower publication titled "*Pay Attention to Yourselves and All the Flock*," part of a *Kingdom Ministry School Textbook* designed for use in seminars held with elders of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1981.[7] On page 144, we find the following:

5 The *Watchtower*, May 15, 1963, page 300.
6 *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary*, under "law," with synonyms.
7 This textbook was prepared under the direction of the Teaching Committee of the Governing Body. Among its members then were Albert Schroeder, Karl Klein, Leo Greenlees, Ted Jaracz.

Under "the Law of the Christ" (Gal. 6:2)

Jehovah's people today are not under the control of the body of law known as the Mosaic law of ancient Israel. (Col. 2:13, 14) Paul showed that since there has been a change in the priesthood from Aaron to that of Jesus Christ in the manner of Melchizedek, Christians are under a new legal arrangement of control. (Heb. 5:4-6; 7:12) Some rules of conduct found in the old law of Moses have been restated under the law of the Christ and are enforceable upon Christians. (Acts 15:19-21) Other rules of conduct from the law of Moses with their underlying principles, though not enforceable in the Christian congregation, are nevertheless useful to Christians as they walk in the way of holiness. (Jas. 2:8, 9) It is well for elders to consider some of these guidelines that are intended to protect the Christian congregation and keep it clean in Jehovah's sight.—Eph. 5:25-27.

LAW OF THE CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION

Christians are not under the Mosaic law, but under "the law of the Christ." (Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 9:21)

Consists of a body of rules for Christian conduct. (Gal. 6:16)

The doctrine is advanced that Christians are "under a *new legal arrangement of control*," a "*body of rules* for Christian conduct" that is "*enforceable* on Christians." This is no more than a roundabout way of saying "a new law code." A simple reading of the texts cited in the paragraphs following the heading will make plain that the words found in those verses are made to say something other than what they actually say, often by ignoring the context. The Scriptures themselves make clear what the "law of the Christ" (referred to at Galatians 6:2) is, and it is definitely *not* a "new legal arrangement of control" or a "body of rules."[8]

When God brought Christians out from under the Law Covenant into his New Covenant (which change He accomplished through Christ as both Mediator and High Priest), He did not cause them to pass from one law code to another law code (or "legal arrangement" of a "body of rules"). His Word states that thenceforth His law would be written on *hearts*, not on stone or parchment or vellum or any other writing material.[9] The "law of the Christ" is

8 The context, in fact, speaks of it as being fulfilled in `bearing one another's burdens.'
9 Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 8:8-10.

found in his *teachings*, his example and *way of life*, none of which point to any "new legal arrangement of control." His law is instead shown to be "the royal law of love" and the "law of faith," and neither love nor faith can possibly be reduced to, or fully expressed by, a "body of rules" and regulations. (Compare Galatians 6:2 with Romans 3:27, 28; 13:8; James 2:8.) You cannot legislate love and faith into people's hearts. That is doubtless why the apostle Paul says that "the law is not based on faith," because law (in the sense of a body of rules) is essentially predicated, not on faith, but simply upon compliance—either you do it or you do not. Law-keeping becomes the criterion of righteousness. Those keeping the rules are counted righteous; those who do not are punished.[10] The superior importance of faith is to that extent obscured.

For such serious reasons the apostle presented the issue of Christian freedom—including freedom from being under some humanly "enforceable" religious law system—in the strongest terms, saying:

> I do not shove aside the undeserved kindness of God; for if righteousness is through law, Christ actually died for nothing.[11]

> You are parted from Christ, whoever you are that try to be declared righteous by means of law; you have fallen away from his undeserved kindness.[12]

To teach that Christians in the New Covenant are again under a new "legal arrangement of control" denies the Scriptural teaching that God's law is now written on human hearts, the control being accomplished, not by a "body of laws," but by holy Spirit. It negates the Christian freedom that results from being, not under law, but under undeserved kindness or grace. This teaching would condemn Christians to death, for "by works of law no flesh will be declared righteous," since law inevitably condemns those under it due to their inability to observe it perfectly.[13] It leads to the same self-deception that many under the Law Covenant fell prey to—that of seeking to establish one's own righteousness by law observance, carrying out the duties imposed by law.[14] It allows for the same boasting and feeling of superiority over others that were typical of those in Jesus' day who stressed a strict holding

10 Galatians 3:10-12, *NIV*.
11 Galatians 2:21.
12 Galatians 5:4.
13 Romans 3:20; Galatians 3:10, 11.
14 Romans 10:3, 4.

to rule—as defined by their religious leaders—those who took pride in their compliance with regulations.[15] Worst of all, it minimizes and detracts from the magnificence of God's love, in that He gives life, not as a reward for observing laws, Mosaic or any other, but as a "free gift," accepted by faith, appreciated through love and responded to by loving acts, but never earned.[16]

In 1976, the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses decided to make a revision of its manual called *Aid to Answering Branch Office Correspondence*. The manual serves to direct all Branch Committees of the organization in their handling of problems. The purpose of the revision was so that the manual would contain the more recent decisions of the Governing Body. Staff members Gene Smalley and Robert Wallen were assigned to draft an updated manual and they submitted their proposed revision in September 1977, the work having been done primarily by Smalley. The Writing Committee assigned me to do the final editing of the material. I found the assignment a depressing one. Though familiar with the original manual from past experience, I now felt the full force of the extent to which a legalistic outlook had come to dominate the organization's approach to Christianity. Two years later I still had not completed the editing and in fact had made very little progress. I offered to turn over the assignment to someone else but Lyman Swingle, then the Coordinator of the Writing Committee, said he personally was in no hurry to see the material finished, that as far as he was concerned "the longer it was left `on the back burner' the better." Consider the index of the 114 pages of the proposed material:

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Virtually every area of life—family and marital affairs, employment, social and community relationship—is covered by one or another of the policies contained in this publication. But the 174 headings listed in the index gives only a *surface* view of the reality found in the pages, a small idea of just how extensive and complex the organizational policies had become. And even the manual's pages tell only a portion of the story, for they contain abundant references to *Watchtower* articles which spell out in even greater detail the technicalities of the policies developed. The proliferation of rulings and sub-rulings found in its pages (some directly "enforceable" and others only subtly so) can only be described as Talmudic. And every year that passes sees new rulings formulated as a result of Governing Body sessions.

Though the revised manual was to be called *Correspondence Guidelines*, any person who occupies the position of congregational elder, traveling overseer or Branch Committee member knows that the manual's contents form no mere guide but have the force of *law*. He knows that if he does not adhere closely to these policies and decisions in his handling of matters he will be subjected to discipline. These policies are, in fact, treated with the same respect as if they were direct statements from Scripture, divine law. Witnesses are taught to view them in this way. As far

back as the *Watchtower* of May 15, 1944, page 152, we find this statement:

> It must always be kept in mind that God's organization of his people is Theocratic, not democratic. The laws of his organization come from himself, the great Theocrat, Jehovah, the Supreme One. ...Quaintly put, a Theocratic organization is ruled from the top down (which means from the Most High God downward) and not from the bottom up (that is, from the people of the congregation upward).

It is quite evident that what is called the "great body of theocratic law" found today within the Witness organization did not originate with the people of the congregation, those at the so-called "bottom." The "top" from which this "body of law" emanated, however, was in reality no higher than the leadership of the Witness community, its actual "controlling authority."

Legalism's Subtle Invasion

The organization's own history shows that, basically, the so-called "great body of theocratic law" began its growth during the presidency of the second president of the Watch Tower Society, Joseph F. Rutherford (from 1916 to 1942), for during the presidency of the founder of the Society, Charles Taze Russell (from 1881 to 1916), the organization was notably free of legalism. Following Russell's death and Rutherford's election to the presidency, a totally different tone and spirit manifested itself in the organization's administration. Rutherford was not a person inclined to tolerate disagreement. We have already seen that A. H. MacMillan, a close associate of Rutherford, said that, "He would never tolerate anything that would be contrary to what <u>he</u> clearly understood the Bible to teach."[17] This statement reveals not only the propensity for control the Society's president had and the enormous authority with which he had vested himself, but also that it was *his* understanding of what the Scriptures taught which determined what all members must be guided by. Those of us among the Witnesses who lived during that presidency know that "being theocratic" came to mean that we would accept virtually without question whatever instructions were received from the headquarters organization.

17 Underlining mine.

We have seen the manner in which "field service" became essentially a "work of law" for all members. This initial step was followed by others as additions to the "great body of Theocratic law." During Rutherford's presidency it came to include such matters as the refusal to salute a flag or stand for a national anthem, refusal to accept alternative service provided for those who had conscientious objections to military service—all issues not specifically dealt with in Scripture.

If individuals on the basis of personal conviction could not conscientiously engage in any, or all, of these things, then they rightly should abstain. (Compare Romans 14:5-12, 22, 23.) But none of these matters were left to individual conscience; they now became organizational law, and adherence to that law in all respects was required for one to be counted a faithful Christian. Nonetheless, during Rutherford's lifetime the volume of laws developed was tiny compared to what was to follow. While those failing to follow them were looked down upon as "compromisers," no punitive measures, such as disfellowshiping, were taken toward them on a congregational level. In other areas, only conduct that showed severe violations of morality brought disfellowshipment and during my early years of association these expulsions seemed quite rare. There was certainly not the inclination to scrutinize people's lives that later became so common.

The Major Period of "Theocratic" Legislation

It was in the 1950s that the real development of what amounts to a complete system of law for Jehovah's Witnesses began, a code of rules and regulations that covers virtually every aspect of life. This came largely as the result of a growing emphasis on the process of "disfellowshiping" which surfaced during the preceding decade, particularly from 1944 onward.[18] For the first few ensuing years there was simply discussion of the Scriptural counsel itself, as for example the apostolic counsel at 1 Corinthians chapter five, with its exhortation not to fellowship with "anyone who

18 The *Watchtower*, May 15, 1944, pages 151-155. These articles discussed such texts as Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8; and 2 Thessalonians 3:14. They mainly emphasized that the handling of matters of wrong conduct was not to be done by the congregation as a body (as was the case previously) but by "authorized Theocratic representatives." (See also page 246 and the statement there quoted from this 1944 magazine.) Later articles built upon this basis and led to ever greater involvement by appointed congregational "servants" in judicial matters.

calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater, or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler."[19] There is no question as to the validity of that counsel and the wisdom of adhering to it. But the organization now began to branch out from such Scriptural exhortation into the field of legislation, so that in course of time an actual code of rules came into existence.

In what way did all this come about? How did a few early rules formulated and enforced during Rutherford's presidency later experience a virtual explosion into the present "great body of law"?

The headquarters administration at Brooklyn maintains what is called a "Service Department." This department supervises the activity in the United States of all traveling representatives (circuit and district overseers) and that of all congregational representatives (elders and ministerial servants). Questions on policy and procedure received from any of these sources are regularly handled by the Service Department, whose staff members have divided among them various "sections" of the country. With the increased emphasis on disfellowshiping, particularly from the 1950s on, questions began to arrive from congregational overseers and traveling overseers requesting more explicit definitions of certain conduct deemed sinful, particularly in the field of sexual immorality, but also embracing other fields. The congregational overseers wanted to know, what was the Society's "policy" in such cases? What action should the congregation take?

Inquiries from these men therefore came in to the Brooklyn headquarters of the Watch Tower. In many cases the "section man" of the Service Department did not feel qualified to supply the definition requested or to lay out in specific terms precisely what did or did not constitute "grounds for disfellowshiping" in the circumstance involved. The standard procedure in all such cases is summed up in an expression that was used again and again with growing frequency. That expression was: "Send it to Freddy."

By "Freddy" was meant Fred Franz, who was then the Watch Tower Society's vice president and the acknowledged principal writer and Bible scholar for the organization. The question was forwarded to him and he supplied the requested definition or application of Scripture to the matter, usually in the form of a memorandum. Since in most cases, the Scriptures themselves contained no specific discussion of the matter in question, much of the answers' content consisted of interpretative reasoning, the reasoning of the vice president. His responses were, of course, subject to

19 Corinthians 5:11, *NIV*.

approval by the president, Nathan Knorr, even to his veto, though that seems to have been infrequent. There is also no doubt that the *manner* in which the Service Department presented the issues, and *their observations* made when submitting the questions, influenced the replies they received and thus played a measurable part in the policies that actually developed. The vice president had no firsthand knowledge whatsoever of the circumstances involved in the cases. Furthermore he had no personal communication with the persons whose lives would be affected by the decisions he rendered.

I do not question the sincerity of Fred Franz's efforts in this area. But the result, I believe, illustrates how wrong it is to allocate to any man, not the mere extending of *counsel* or *advice*, but the actual *deciding* of matters that rightfully should rest with the individual consciences of those personally involved. However sincere the vice president was, it is an undeniable fact that his rather cloistered life at the headquarters from his early twenties onward had largely isolated him from life as lived by ordinary people 'on the outside' (a term used frequently by staff workers at the Watch Tower headquarters with reference to life outside their select community). The things being experienced by those who were engaged in secular employment, who had homes and families, knew what it was to be married or to be parents, had to face the problems and difficulties of day-to-day living as most people face them, formed little or no part of his own experience. From my own personal association with him over many years, it was evident that he was quite detached—or perhaps the expression could be "insulated"—from the reality of life as lived by the average person. He was in no sense a "hermit" and accepted occasional invitations to people's homes for meals or weekends, but he was always the "special" guest, someone looked upon as different from ordinary people. Conversation rarely if ever dealt with the more mundane aspects of human occupations. I recall one summer in the late 1940s or early 1950s when he was at our family home in Kentucky on vacation (as I was also there on vacation from Puerto Rico), and he commented on himself and Nathan Knorr, saying: "Brother Knorr is a practical man. I am a scholar." I am sure he was not an unfeeling person, yet in his outlook toward the problems of human living he seemed somewhat otherworldly, at times almost fatalistic about difficulties and even tragedies.

For me, one instance of this was notably impressive. In the 1970s a nephew of mine contracted a sudden pancreas infection that in just three days ended his life. He was only 34. He left behind a lovely young wife and two small daughters. At the funeral, which my wife and I attended, the funeral parlor was packed. As the invited

speaker, the Society's vice president (great uncle to the deceased) walked up to the podium, paused, and then in a very loud, almost stentorian, voice said: "Isn't it grand to be ALIVE!" [20] After that introductory exclamation, for several minutes he discussed, effectively and dramatically, the meaning of the words at Ecclesiastes 7:1-4. [21] As yet my nephew had not been mentioned in any way. Then, after approximately ten minutes, in referring to the words about it being 'better for us to go to the house of mourning,' the speaker said, "And the reason why is that sooner or later we're all going to end up like THIS!" and, without turning, he threw his hand backward in the direction of the coffin where my nephew's body lay. The talk went on with further commentary on the Biblical section but with no other reference to the dead man until the close when the standard statements of the reason for the occasion and the names of the deceased's survivors were given.

I felt a sense of burning anger—not at my uncle, for I sincerely and honestly believe he thought this was the best way to deal with the situation, the best way to combat the natural sensations of grief and loss. What I felt incensed at was the *organizational attitude* that allowed a person to feel fully justified to speak in a way which essentially transformed the dead person's body into a vehicle or platform on which to base a talk, a talk that expounded organizational doctrine, but which throughout simply made no mention of sadness at the loss of the *person* whose life had ended, as though by ignoring this the hurt would be lessened. I kept saying to myself, "James deserves something better than this—surely the text about a 'name being better than good oil' calls for talking about the name *he made for himself in life*. Surely there is *something* that can be learned from his life, something about him that can be said to encourage us, the living."[22] Once again, I do not think my uncle lacked any of the feelings I had or lacked a capacity for sorrow and

20 I still vividly recall the sinking sensation I felt in my heart at this.

21 These verses read (*NW*): "A name is better than good oil, and the day of death then the day of one's being born. Better is it to go to the house of mourning than to go to the banquet house, because that is the end of all mankind; and the one alive should take it to his heart. Better is vexation than laughter, for by the crossness of the face the heart becomes better. The heart of the wise ones is in the house of mourning, but the heart of the stupid ones is in the house of rejoicing."

22 I had been asked to give a prayer following the talk and I remember feeling somewhat choked and that I began by saying, "An enemy has come into our midst and has robbed us of a loved one. A wife has lost her husband. Little children have lost a father. A father and a mother have lost a son. And we all have lost a friend." Then, for the first time, I could hear some expressions of sorrow among those attending and I frankly found it a welcome sound. I tried to include some of the good things about the man, things worth our imitating, for I thought, "Surely now if ever is the time to express appreciation for whatever worthwhile qualities he had. We owe it to him, to his memory."

compassion. I believe he simply reflected his training and a lifetime of disciplining himself against expressing strong feeling about anything other than "theocratic interests."[23]

Despite his degree of seminarian otherworldliness and his own recognition of his lack of practicality, he was handed the responsibility of making decisions in a very broad range of areas where he had no personal experience whatsoever—and where the Scriptures themselves were essentially silent. To his credit, in one of the early Governing Body sessions I shared in, he expressed appreciation that such decisions were no longer left to him to make as an individual and that the responsibility was now shared with others.[24] Unfortunately, the majority of his fellow Governing Body members were not much more in touch than he was with the problems of life most people experience, particularly if they had spent most their life at the Brooklyn headquarters, as many had.[25] True, most of these men engaged in at least some door-to-door work among the public and had their social contacts with Witness friends living "on the outside"—but, on the whole, these were somewhat like "excursions," quickly over and then they returned "inside," to their own self-contained "city" of Bethel, where all their needs were supplied. At Bethel their rooms were cleaned, beds made, clothes washed and pressed, meals cooked and served, shoes repaired or suits cleaned and pressed for a nominal fee, and they never had to think of rent, property upkeep and repair, health insurance, or anything more than a minimal amount of taxes. They shared in the good things others "on the outside" offered them, but rarely if ever shared in their difficulties and hardships.

In the course of time, the Service Department, then under the direction of Harley Miller as office overseer, began collating Fred Franz's replies and placing them in binders. They were regularly

23 In the 1980s, when conducting the morning text for the "Bethel family," he emphasized the importance of the work the headquarters staff was doing by relating that, in 1939, when notified by his mother of his father's death, he informed her that he would not be able to make it to the funeral due to the severe press of work at Bethel. His mother angrily phoned Judge Rutherford and, as my uncle told it, the "Judge" ordered him to go to the funeral. This was said with no evident sense of embarrassment, but rather as illustrative of the importance he gave to his assigned work at Bethel, the "house of God." (Compare Matthew 15:3-5.)

24 Nonetheless, when the rightness of earlier positions and policies came into question, he generally argued against change and expressed this sentiment in his vote.

25 Contrary to what some might think, Nathan Knorr inclined to be more reasonable in these areas. He and Fred Franz thus at times were on "opposites sides of the fence" in some of the voting. Out of all the Governing Body members only one, Albert Schroeder, knew what it was to be a parent, and even in his case he did not know what it was to do so as the average working man does, since even after the birth of his son he continued to be employed by the Society in teaching assignments as a Kingdom Ministry School instructor, with his housing and other needs cared for.

referred to when handling questions coming in "from the field." The department had several volumes of such memoranda accumulated when some years later the president, Nathan Knorr, made one of his periodic inspection visits to the department. Seeing the volumes, Knorr inquired as to what they were. After being informed, he instructed the department to eliminate them and they were subsequently destroyed. They no longer have those volumes in the Service Department. They have new ones—composed now of the decisions that the Governing Body makes and they use them in much the same way as they used the old ones. Of course, many of the replies supplied by then Vice President Franz, had been eventually put in print in the columns of the *Watchtower* magazine. And there is no question that the basic framework on which the whole system of the "great body of theocratic law" rests was developed during that earlier period. The Governing Body generally has done little more than build extensions onto that basic framework, or define more specifically certain details found therein. It would be impossible to discuss even a small fraction of the total but consider here just a few examples:

"Theocratic Law" in Actual Application

The revised manual to be called *Correspondence Guidelines*, as it was turned over to me for editing, contained thirteen pages on "Employment," a field of legislation into which the organization had not ventured previous to the 1950s. It began with the statement, found elsewhere in the Watch Tower publications, that:

> While an individual's employment can affect his standing in the congregation, it is not for us to tell anyone what kind of work he may or may not do.

This sounds nice, but in reality it simply means that while the organization cannot control or dictate a person's choice of employment (an obvious fact), it nevertheless may *censure* him for that choice or even *disfellowship* him for choosing or continuing in an employment that the organization has ruled unacceptable. That is the way it works out in actual practice. The manual as submitted contains several pages of examples to illustrate the policies set out. Under the subheading, "Work that is not itself unscriptural but that links one with a wrong practice or makes one a promoter of it," the manual supplied such examples as these:

> EXAMPLE: Two women work as maids on a military base. One is employed in a home by a family, the husband of which is in the military. The other is a maid employed to clean the barracks.
>
> Comments: The first woman concludes that she could accept such work for the family and not be in conflict with Isaiah 2:4 [which speaks of beating one's swords into plowshares and not learning war anymore]. She reasons that, despite the location of her work and the fact that the "breadwinner" of the family is in the military, she is providing a common service for individuals in a home and is not employed by an organization in conflict with the Scriptures. (2 Ki. 5:2, 3; 5:15-19; Phil. 4:22) She continues to be a member of the congregation, though if she sought the privilege of pioneer service consideration might have to be given to how her employment is affecting others and whether she is viewed as a good example.
>
> The other woman, by her regular work, is performing a needed service in the accomplishment of the overall objectives of an organization the purpose of which is out of harmony with Isaiah 2:4. She is paid by the military, works on military property and is doing work regularly that makes her a part of that organization and its objectives. She is in conflict with Isaiah 2:4.

Thus, the first woman who works domestically for a military man in his household on the base can retain her standing in the congregation; the second, who cleans barracks, perhaps on the same base, cannot. As the rest of the manual and as all Watch Tower publications make clear, anyone "in conflict with Isaiah 2:4" is either to be disfellowshiped or pronounced "disassociated."[26] The first woman might be paid by an officer, even a general, who orders the men in the barracks into combat. Her pay comes from him, true, but the money comes from his military salary. Still, her work does not make her "unclean." The second woman who cleans barracks, because her pay comes from the military as an organization and because she is somehow viewed as contributing to the "overall objectives" of the military, is counted as bloodguilty and worthy of being cut off from the congregation.

It is difficult to conceive of more tortured reasoning and emphasis on technical distinctions than this. It is equally difficult not to see a parallel between such legalistic interpretations and those

26 The use of the term "disassociated" came into being as a euphemism, being used in place of "disfellowshiped" where sensitive issues, such as entering the military, voting, or other such matters were involved. It later came to be used also of anyone who formally withdrew from the organization. Whichever term is used, the effect is the same, for "disassociated" persons today are treated the same as disfellowshiped persons.

of Pharisaical and ancient rabbinical sources.—Compare Matthew 23:16-22.

Following this policy, a Witness barber might set up a barbershop adjacent to a military base in an area where there were no nearby residences. All his customers might be soldiers, whose pay comes from the military. He would not be judged guilty of 'violating Isaiah 2:4.' But if he did the same barbering on the base for those same soldiers, receiving pay from the military administration, he would, by this line of reasoning, be bloodguilty, worthy of disfellowshipment. Such reasoning can only be termed Pharisaical.

Nor is this a case of mere hypothetical examples. Many actual cases have been dealt with in precisely this manner, including situations involving Witness women who worked in "PX" stores on military bases and whose selling of such items as foodstuffs, cosmetics, etc., in that location somehow made them guilty of supporting the "overall objectives" of the military and hence bloodguilty. Elders have actually taken disfellowshiping action against a man simply for working in pest and rodent control—exterminating roaches and mice—because this work was regularly performed on a military base! Those viewed as infringing the Society's policy are given a period of time, perhaps six months, to cease such employment, and if they do not do so they either are disfellowshiped or are declared "disassociated," the results being in reality the same.[27]

Consider another example from the manual (as proposed) in this same section:

> EXAMPLE: A brother owning a plumbing business receives a call to do emergency repairs on a broken water pipe in the basement of a local church. Some time later a representative of the church contacts another brother, a builder, about putting a new roof and addition on the church.
>
> Comments: The first brother concludes that, as a human service, his conscience would permit him to care for the emergency

27 In actuality the prophecy at Isaiah 2:4 is simply that, a prophecy. It is not set forth as the basis for some kind of law or for a code of rules but simply foretells the peace-giving effects of God's acting among the nations on behalf of his covenant people, Israel. A California university faculty member, commenting on the expression "in violation of Isaiah 2:4," said, "How in the world do the Witnesses imagine that just because the Bible foretells a peaceful world, no one now must take a job washing the floors in an army base? Might as well say that just because Isaiah 11 prophesies that 'the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den, parents now should let their children go into a snake pit." One might also ask why the prophecy at Joel 3:10 should not be applied with comparable force when it contrastingly says, "Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears."

situation, though advising the church to seek another plumber for any regular work. Likely few would be critical of his helping anyone during an emergency or view him as reprehensible.

The second brother realizes that, even though he has put roofs and additions on many homes and businesses, for him to contract to do so in the case of the church would be lending considerable support to the advancement of false worship. It would not be just an incidental contact, such as a postman's delivering mail, or an act of humanitarian aid in a desperate situation. It would be a major undertaking that would involve lengthy work on a building used exclusively for the advancement of false worship, aiding in the perpetuation of Babylon the Great. (2 Cor. 6:14-18) As a Christian he could not do that.

By saying "As a Christian he could not do that," the manual simply means that if he does he will be subject to disfellowshiping. This, too, is not hypothetical in the least. In the chapter that follows the extremes to which this policy can be carried are illustrated.

Such policies illustrate clearly that the organization is indeed run "from the top down and not from the bottom up." What this actually results in is a usurping of the individual's exercise of personal conscience, accomplished by superimposing on his conscience the rulings legislated by the organizational leadership, rulings made binding and "enforceable" through disfellowshiping decrees.[28]

The examples given only touch the surface. Since then, many additional rules have been made. There seems to be nothing on which the organization is not willing to legislate. A "Question from Readers" in the June 15, 1982, *Watchtower* (page 31) even rules on whether a Witness can submit to medical treatment in which (to reduce the risk of stroke by blood clot or for other purposes) a leech is used to draw off blood. The answer, based on a very wandering type of argument, is "No." [29]

Unbalanced Thinking

By legalistic thinking, a comparatively innocent minor action can be transformed into a major one of great culpability. In life there is

28 As shown earlier, this sometimes, particularly where military issues are involved, comes in the form of automatic "disassociation."

29 Though saying initially that such "use of leeches would conflict with what the Bible says," the only Scriptures referred to thereafter are God's words to Noah that humans should not eat blood (Genesis 9:3, 4), and his command through Moses that the *blood of slain animals* be poured onto the ground. (Leviticus 17:10-14) Since no human will eat the leech, and no one will likely retain the blood the leech sucks, it is difficult to see what possible connection there is here.

need for balance, since the rightness or wrongness of many things really comes down to a matter of *degree*. As a simple example, a gentle pat with one's hand on another's cheek signifies affection, whereas a strong slap on the cheek tells of anger, even hatred. The action of the hand and fingers is the same in both cases; it is the difference in the *degree* of force that converts an expression of affection into one of hatred. So, too, in more complex aspects. While the element of degree may not enter notably into such clear-cut offenses as murder (a murderer does not "slightly kill" or "moderately kill" or "strongly kill" someone), or theft, or adultery, it does play a deciding role in a wide variety of life's affairs. Thus, people commonly work to earn money. This does not, however, justify classing them as "greedy." But if the *degree* of concern for money passes a certain point, then greed is evident. Who can specifically identify that "certain point" so as to draw a clear line of demarcation, one that divides precisely between the proper and improper concern for gain? It is only when the evidence *clearly points to excess* that one can feel justified in assessing another as greedy. This is true in a whole host of matters.

Again, in Bible times the religious leaders failed to exercise such balance, to distinguish between actions of a minor nature and those which might be termed major. Thus, when they saw Jesus' disciples, on the Sabbath day, picking grains of wheat, rubbing them in their hands to remove the chaff and eating them, they accused them of violating the Sabbath law against work. How could they? Because, in their unbalanced, extremely scrupulous thinking, the men were, in effect, both harvesting and threshing. Indeed, if they had picked large quantities of grain, loading up their cloaks with the wheat, and then rubbed the chaff off, producing piles of such grain, they would have been doing just that. But they were not. And Jesus reproved the religious leaders for 'condemning the innocent.'—Matthew 12:1-7.

This same unbalanced thinking seems to be the only explanation for the positions taken by the Watch Tower organization in a number of the policies already described. Perhaps nothing demonstrates this more forcefully than does the issue of alternative service to be performed in place of military service.

Submission to the Superior Authorities

> *Remind them to be submissive to the government and the authorities, to obey them, and to be ready for any honourable form of work.*—Titus 3:1, *New English Bible.*

In many enlightened countries, the government provides for a nonmilitary form of service to be performed instead of military service and training. They do this specifically to show consideration for the conscientious objections of some citizens to participation in war or military service, a concession that is surely commendable. In *Crisis of Conscience* this subject was discussed in part.[30] As explained there, the organization's policy was that no Witness can accept an order from a draft board (or any other governmental agency other than a court) to perform alternative service—which generally consisted of hospital work, rendering services to elderly people, work in libraries, in a forest camp, or in some other field that would benefit the community at large.

Since any of these is clearly an "honourable form of work" why was a Witness not to accept it? Because in its being "*alternative* service" it is a "substitute" for military service, and because such work stands *in the place of* military service then, by some process of reasoning, to accept an alternative service assignment from a draft board was deemed the *equivalent* of having accepted military service and therefore one had "compromised," had "violated his neutrality," and he had thereby become bloodguilty. If that reasoning seems remarkably convoluted, there is yet more that follows.

At the same time, when the Witness refusing was arrested and brought to trial for his refusal to comply with the draft board's orders, and is found guilty, if the judge in the trial then *sentenced* the individual to perform such alternative service he could now obey the court order, do the work assigned, and be free from compromise and bloodguilt. The reasoning behind this? The person, having been convicted, was now a prisoner and hence had not "voluntarily" given up his freedom of action and choice of occupation. In actuality, there was nothing "voluntary" to begin with about the government-assigned service, no more than the payment of money as taxes is "voluntary." It was an obligatory, compulsory service, and that is why the man refusing was arrested in the first place.

30 Pages 123-140.

And it might also be said that he had really given up his freedom and choice when he submitted to the Watch Tower organization's deciding for him that obedience to an order from the draft board to perform hospital work or other such service is wrong. In doing that he allowed his conscience to become a prisoner and removed the possibility of making a choice based on personal conscience.

But yet another technicality was introduced. The organization even took the position that if, *previous to the actual sentence* being passed, the Witness was asked by the judge if his conscience would allow him to accept an assignment from the court to do hospital work or similar service, he could not answer in the affirmative but must say, "that is for the court to decide." If he answered, "Yes" (which would have been a truthful answer), he was considered to have "compromised," having made a "deal" with the judge, and thus had broken his integrity. But if he gave the prescribed, approved response already quoted, and then the judge *in sentencing him* assigned him to do hospital work or similar service, he could comply.[31] He was now not guilty of violating the apostolic exhortation to "stop becoming the slaves of men." (1 Corinthians 7:23) Surely such technicalities are truly casuistic and the application of the term "Pharisaical" does not seem too harsh.[32]

This is no light matter. During World War II, in the United States alone some 4,300 young Jehovah's Witnesses went to prison, with sentences ranging as high as 5 years, not simply because of conscientious objection to war, but primarily because, in adhering to the Society's policy, they refused governmental provisions allowing them to perform other service of a non-military nature provided for conscientious objectors. In England, there were 1,593 convictions, including those of 334 women.[33] Though the policy was rescinded in 1996, there still remained hundreds in pris-

31 See *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 148, 149, and footnote 10.

32 All of these technical distinctions were worked out from the 1940s on through the 1960s. While final approval unquestionably rested with Nathan Knorr, and while the Society's attorney Hayden Covington was involved during the 1940s and 1950s, the style of reasoning is not typical of either man but *is* typical of Fred Franz, then vice president. I believe that the later technical distinctions were designed to moderate somewhat the organization's position, thereby reducing the number of those going to prison (in cases where judges were willing to sentence them to hospital or other work) and yet allow for appearing to be upholding the original position in its basic premise as having been right, God-directed. This elaborate policy remained in effect until the May 1, 1996 *Watchtower* declared it a matter of conscience.

33 See *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, page 157.

ons in various lands, the imprisonment resulting from their obeying the Society's policy. In 1988, in just the countries of France and Italy there were some 1,000 Jehovah's Witnesses in prison for this reason.[34]

In *Crisis of Conscience*, when relating the discussion of this issue by the Governing Body in numerous sessions over a period of years, only brief mention was made of a resulting survey taken among all the Branch Committees operating throughout the world under the direction of the Governing Body. The survey was suggested by Milton Henschel since, as he put it, 'perhaps it would reveal that only a relatively few countries had alternative service provisions.' If such were the case, then that would militate against the need for making any policy change. Apparently the fact that men in those "few countries" were in prison and that other hundreds of men would yet go to prison (if the policy continued as it was) would not be of sufficient weight or gravity to make the issue a crucial one.

In the survey the Branch Committees were to be asked whether the Witnesses in their country understood the reasoning behind the policy and its Scripturalness and also what the committee members' own views were of the existing policy. Since the Governing Body assigned me to carry out the survey correspondence with the 90 or more Branch Committees, I have in my files copies of all their replies. The responses received were revealing.

Before considering them, I might here quote a portion of a memorandum submitted to the Governing Body by member Lloyd Barry. Warning against any change in the existing policy he wrote:

> Those who have studied out the matter on the basis of the Bible and who have been through the experience, have no question about maintaining a stand of "no compromise"—unless someone comes along and tries to plant such a question. A change of viewpoint sponsored by the Governing Body would be very upsetting for these countries and brothers, where they have fought for so long in behalf of their uncompromising stand.

What do the facts show as to the *actual* thinking of those affected? Does the picture portrayed in the memorandum fit the reality? The information that follows is fairly extensive (though only a fraction of the whole). I believe it merits the space. The reason is that it so graphically demonstrates the power of indoctrination to cause people to sacrifice liberty, years of life and livelihood and family association, in order to obey something that they do not

34 *Amnesty International Report for 1988*, pages 199, 206.

understand or really believe—doing this purely out of a sense of loyalty to an organization. Anything that produces such a blindly submissive state of mind is fraught with potential danger of even greater consequence.

Since disagreement with any position of the organization is generally viewed as indicating a lack of loyalty and even a lack of faith and confidence in God's direction, it is not at all surprising that the majority of the Committees expressed full support for the organization's policy. What *is* surprising is the significant number of Branch Committees that spoke of serious difficulties of Witnesses in their country either as to understanding the policy or seeing any Scriptural basis for it. Not that they were not complying with the policy. Witness men were going to jail rather than act contrary to it. But did they feel as Governing Body member Barry put it that 'there was no question' about the policy that led to their being put in prison? Here are direct quotations from the letters sent by some Branch Committees:

> **Austria**: "Many of the brothers do not fully understand the Scriptural position why we should not render such alternative service."
>
> **Brazil**: "We believe that the brothers would have no difficulty to prove their stand if the work involved direct support to the military machine, say, working in a munitions factory or constructing barracks or digging trenches, etc. They would use the same scriptures that they use for objecting to direct military service. The brothers would have difficulty if the work involved building a road for civilian use, or work on some agricultural project or other work of that kind."
>
> **Italy**: "From direct contacts made with the brothers faced with a military service problem we found that in the majority of cases they did not understand why they could not accept alternative civilian service. They maintained that no longer being under the direct jurisdiction of the military authorities because of having been assigned to another ministry, they could accept alternative civilian service just as long as they did not engage in any activity having to do with militarism, but doing nonmilitary work such as in museums or hospitals, etc. they would not be guilty of any violation of their neutrality."
>
> **Spain**: "As a part of the research for this report, a member of the branch committee spoke extensively with three brothers who were exemplary in their neutral stand years ago. He also conversed with three mature elders, two of them from other countries, who have not personally faced the issue in Spain. Varying viewpoints surfaced on many aspects of

this matter, but there was complete agreement on one point:

Practically none of our young brothers really understand why we cannot accept 'substitute service' if it is of a civic nature and not under the control of the military. It seems clear that most of the elders do not understand it either, and therefore they often send youngsters to the [branch] office to get information. So the question comes up, Why don't they understand? Is it lack of personal study? Or is it because the arguments and reasonings we have used are not convincing enough or do not have a clear and firm Bible stand?"[35]

In addition to the sampling presented, Branch Committees in Australia, Belgium, Canada, Fiji, France, Germany, Greece, Hawaii, Malaysia, Nigeria, Norway, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Rhodesia, Thailand, Trinidad, Uruguay and Zaire all expressed problems among Witnesses in their lands as to understanding the organization's policy or seeing its Scriptural basis.

Yet throughout the world Jehovah's Witnesses *did* take an adamant stand in rejecting alternative service (unless sentenced by a judge to perform it). Some may still be in jail in some lands for that reason. That this is really not the result of loyalty to God's Word and their personal conviction of the unscripturalness of the course is evident from what follows. Conformity to an organizational policy, and concern that they not be viewed adversely by that organization and by their peers, seems to be the determinative factor for these young men. While some of the quotations just made touch on this aspect, other letters from the committees were quite explicit, revealing the *basic reason why* Witnesses rejected alternative service provisions made by the governments in their lands.

Belgium: "Few brothers are really in position to explain with the Bible why they refuse . . . basically, they know it is wrong and that the Society views it as such. For that reason some courts said to the brothers that they were pushed by the Society to refuse the provision of the civil service."

Denmark: "While many young brothers seem able to grasp arguments and think them out and explain them to a degree, it is felt that the majority of young brothers today follow the example of others and take the stand expected of them by the brotherhood without really understanding the basic principles and arguments involved, and without being able to explain their stand clearly."

35 In these, and in the quotations that follow, I have underlined certain key points.

> **Hawaii**: "Generally speaking, the brothers here have trouble seeing Bible principles governing the maintaining of strict neutrality. Once they know the Society's stand on such issues, they fully cooperate, but do not see the principles too clearly upon which our stand rests.
>
> **Norway**: "The brothers in Norway do not accept civilian work without a court sentence, mainly because they know that this is the Society's policy and they are loyal to the Society. It is difficult for them to understand why it is wrong to accept civilian work when the work itself is not wrong and condemned by the Bible. They cannot support their stand properly from the Scriptures."
>
> **Spain**: "When an elder discusses the matter of substitute service with someone, that person generally accepts [the position] that substitution amounts to equivalence. But this idea is not usually truly understood. Rather, it is taken to be the organization's viewpoint, and the elders present it as well as they can and the brothers loyally follow through as they know is expected of them. But it seems to us that many brothers find our reasoning somewhat artificial."
>
> **Thailand**: "From our experience many in the past have had problems when trying to maintain their neutrality. Many have refused work out of a kind of group loyalty. They did not know the reason or principle why, but they heard a certain thing was wrong, so they refused."

Lloyd Barry's memorandum spoke of "planting" ideas in the minds of the brothers. The evidence clearly indicates that any planting done was by the Watch Tower Society itself, since it is plain that these Witnesses would never have arrived at the policy laid down by the organization from their own reading of the Scriptures or as a product of their personal conscience. Nor was it only those of the so-called "rank and file" or the younger Witnesses who had such serious difficulty with the policy. Men on the Branch Committees themselves found it difficult to support, either on the basis of reason or Scripture.

Referring again to Lloyd Barry's memorandum, he also stated:

> In this, the issue is not taxation, employment, etc., but COMPROMISE. We are agreed that we should not take up arms for the military. Then we should be agreed, too, that if the military or any other agency asks us to do something as a substitute therefore, we do not accept the alternative. That is our action. Then, if we are handed over to a court, and a judge sentences us, that is his action.

> We accept the sentence. We have not compromised. We are integrity keepers. It is as simple as all that.—Job 27:5.

Yet, along with most other Witnesses, many of the Branch Committee members themselves did not find the stated position by any means "simple." They saw no logic in the position that it would be wrong to accept a work order from a draft board but all right to accept the identical order to do the identical work under identical circumstances if that order was given by a court. They could not see how this could be so inasmuch as these agencies are all simply *branches of the same government*, of the same "superior authority." Thus the Chilean Branch Committee pointed out some of the inconsistencies, saying:

> If the work itself does not contribute toward the military objective, does it matter what agency orders that [it] be accepted? Here in Chile it is not clear just how independent courts are. This is a military government and many of the civilians who serve in the Cabinet are just "show" pieces. The military run the show.. . . It is all just one system.

From then Communist Poland came this expression:

> As far as we know, the German brothers take up such work upon the basis that the administrative authorities direct them to the work and not the military. Would this mean that they would not take up the same work, <u>under the same conditions</u>, if the military authorities would direct them to do it? <u>Is it not the same Caesar</u>?

In a very lengthy letter, the Canadian Branch Committee focused especially on this point. Referring to the existing policy as a "confusing 'agency' approach," they said:

> . . . we feel that officials would find it hard to see where we draw the line. We would complicate matters for them and for the brothers as well. If, for example, we tried to make a point of the draft board or induction center being a part of the <u>political</u> setup and that we are neutral in matters of politics, they would wonder why the courts are not also viewed as an arm of the same governmental political setup.
>
> On the other hand, if we try to make it a matter of the agency being a part of the <u>military</u> setup and argue our neutrality from that point of view, they might concede that they appreciate our desire to have nothing to do with the military, but if the actual work assigned is the same, regardless of the agency involved, then what's the difference? We would find that a problem to argue

> successfully. . . . Today, courts, councils, police, induction centers and the military are all manifestations of Caesar's authority. All are, in one way or another, his agencies.

The matter seemed summed up in this simple question from the Nigerian Branch Committee:

> If something is wrong Scripturally, then why should a court order make it all right to do it?

The questions themselves illustrate how the organization's policies have led to technical complexities as well as to confusion on the part of men sincerely seeking to be guided by God's own Word.

Illustrating to what extremes the organization's concept could and did lead, consider this remarkable situation and stand presented by the Branch Committee in Sweden:

> Even in such instances where our brothers have been offered to perform their National Service training <u>at their ordinary place of work</u>, for example, at a County Administration or the State Railways, they refused, because they have held that they could not accept any substitute whatsoever for the National Service training, not <u>even if this was purely civil, or even meant that they could stay on in their ordinary daily occupations</u>.

Incredible as it may seem, that is actually the stand taken in that country on the basis of the organization's policy, namely, that even where the authorities, bending over backwards to accommodate the Witnesses' religious position, in some cases offered to let their regular, customary job be counted as done in place of such training, they must refuse!

This is not due to convictions personally arrived by the Swedish Witnesses. It is due to being so sensitized by the organization's policy decreeing that substitute work was the *equivalent* of military service, that any offer of *any kind* had to be refused.[36] Following a "zone trip" to branch offices in Scandinavian countries, Robert Wallen, the secretary for the Service Committee of the Governing Body, expressed his concern to me on this matter. He related a conversation with one Scandinavian Witness who said, `If I accept the government's assignment of alternative service they will assign me to work in a hospital here in my area and I will be able to live at home with my family. But the Society's policy is that I cannot do this and must refuse. I will then be arrested, tried and sentenced and the court will again assign me to work in a hospital. But this time it will be in another part of the country. I will

36 The Swedish government finally solved the matter by exempting Jehovah's Witnesses totally from all service.

be doing exactly the same work *but* I will be separated from my home and family. Does this really make sense?'

Branch Committee members did not only question the *logic* of the organization's policy. They also presented *Scriptural evidence* in favor of a different approach. As just one example, the Branch Committee in Brazil expressed the view of the committee, saying:

> The point is that the young man has made clear his stand to the military authorities, showing Scripturally why he cannot participate in any war or even be trained for it. So, what Scriptures could be used to show that it would be improper to do civilian work ordered by the authorities, since he has made clear his Scriptural stand? This [that is, doing such assigned civilian work] seems to be supported by Matth. 5:41; Rom. 13:7; Titus 3:1-3; 1 Peter 2:13, 14 and others.

The Scriptures they referred to read as follows (*New World Translation*):

> Matthew 5:41: "If someone under authority impresses you into service for a mile, go with him two miles."

> Romans 13:7: "Render to all their dues, to him who calls for the tax, the tax; to him who calls for the tribute, the tribute; to him who calls for fear, such fear; to him who calls for honor, such honor."

> Titus 3:1-3:"Continue reminding them 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. For even we were once senseless, disobedient, being misled, being slaves to various desires and pleasures, carrying on badness and envy, abhorrent, hating one another."

> 1 Peter 2:13, 14: "For the Lord's sake subject yourselves to every human creation; whether to kings as being superior or to governors, as being sent by him to inflict punishment on evildoers but to praise doers of good."

Reading the letters of these Branch Committee members I could not help but contrast the thoughtfulness and breadth of viewpoint many of their expressions revealed as compared with the narrowness and rigidity of the assertions made by several of the Governing Body members. I had already submitted to the Governing Body a 14-

page, carefully documented discussion of the Biblical and historical evidence relative to submission to government authority when that authority orders a citizen to perform certain work or service of a nonmilitary nature. Among other things, I felt that the evidence clearly showed that performance of such service came within the Scriptural designation of taxation, since taxation from ancient times has included compulsory forms of labor. As just one example, at 1 Kings 5:13-18 we read (*New World Translation*) of Solomon's "bringing up those conscripted for forced labor out of all Israel." The Hebrew expression rendered "forced labor" is the word *mas*, meaning compulsory labor. When the translators of the *Septuagint Version* (of the third century B.C.) translated this Hebrew term—not only here but in other texts where it appears—what Greek term did they employ? They rendered it by the Greek term *phóros*. That is the identical term used by Paul at Romans 13:6 when he speaks of paying tax to the superior authorities.[37] While the term can and undoubtedly does in most cases apply to a money tax, *it is in no way restricted to this*, as the *Septuagint*'s use of it for "compulsory labor" forcefully demonstrates.[38] I regret that in view of its lengthiness it is not possible to present here the complete discussion and the Scriptural, historical, lexicographical, and etymological documentation provided.

What was the result of all this? Remember that any decision made would affect the lives of thousands of persons. The existing policy had already resulted in imprisonments representing tens of thousands of years. Again, I believe the way the matter was handled is remarkably revealing. It illustrates dramatically the way long-standing, traditional policies can exercise overruling power on the thinking of men who have declared their determination to let God's Word be their sole and supreme authority.

37 It may also be remarked that Paul is notable among the writers of the Christian Scriptures in his frequent use of the *Septuagint* renderings when quoting from the Hebrew Scriptures, and this is particularly true in his letter to the Romans.

38 The November 1, 1990, *Watchtower*, page 11, gives a typically one-sided presentation of the matter, stating that Paul's references to "tax" (and "tribute") at Romans 13 "refer specifically to money paid to the State." It cites Luke 10:22 as proof, as if the single reference to a monetary tax there is binding on the sense of *phóros* everywhere. Evidently the writer made only a cursory study of the subject, yet writes with great definiteness. Even the organization's own *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* acknowledges the breadth of application of the term *phóros*. For the term's basic meaning, its interlinear reading shows—not "money paid," or even "tax"—but simply "the thing brought." The "thing" brought could have been money, or produce or service in the form of compulsory labor. In Biblical times tax could and did involve any of these.

The Governing Body met and discussed the issue in four separate sessions extending from September 26 to November 15, 1978. In all these four days of discussion the letters submitted received only cursory attention; none of the arguments or questions received careful analysis or point-by-point discussion, and this was equally true of the fourteen pages of Biblical and historical evidence I had personally supplied. The meetings were typical of most Governing Body sessions in that there was no particular order of discussion, no systematic consideration of one question or point at issue before moving on to consideration of another point at issue. Discussion could jump, as it typically did, from one aspect of the problem to another entirely different and relatively unrelated aspect. One member might conclude with the question, "What Scriptural basis is there then for saying that because a service is 'alternative' it therefore becomes the equivalent of what it substitutes for?" The next member recognized by the chairman might take up a totally different point, leaving the previous member's question hanging in midair.[39]

Those favoring retention of the existing policy referred to the Branch Committee letters primarily to discount their importance. Thus, Ted Jaracz said, "Regardless of what the brothers may say, it is the Bible that guides us." He then went on to discuss some points, not from the Bible, but from certain *Watchtower* articles dealing with the issue.

Yet many of the Branch Committee men had brought up serious points from the Bible and these had neither been refuted nor clearly answered, at least not to the satisfaction of the majority of the Governing Body members themselves, as subsequent voting revealed. Ted Jaracz, however, urged that we should ask ourselves, "Just how much of a problem is it all over the world? He asked this because the survey showed that the majority of the countries had no provision for alternative service. Acknowledging that perhaps "a hundred or so are disfellowshiped" as a result of the existing policy, he asked, "What of all the other brothers in the worldwide organization who rejected alternative service and what of the suffering already undergone by those who took such stand?" This question would seem to say that, because a past wrong view caused considerable suffering, this would somehow justify the continu-

39 The question of substitution equalling equivalency had been raised in the letter (from Belgium) that initiated the whole discussion. The writer, Michel Weber, was an elder who had visited Witnesses in prison in his country and realized their inability to grasp the reasoning behind the Society's policy. Among other things, he asked why, after refusing a blood transfusion, we did not consistently also refuse any *substitute* given in *place of* blood? Should not the reasoning apply in the same way?

ance of the wrong view—and the suffering it would continue to produce! It exemplifies how traditional policies can, in the minds of some, override both Scripture and logic. As a further reason for maintaining the policy that led to this "suffering," he added, "If we allow the brothers this latitude we will have serious problems, similar to those where latitude is shown in matters of employment." In reality, the only "problems" that latitude in matters of employment had produced were problems for those seeking to maintain tight control over the activities of fellow Christians. Whatever risk there might be was not truly to the morality or Christian integrity of the congregation; what was at risk was the exercise of ecclesiastical authority.

Indicative of this, the Society's president, Fred Franz, also expressed doubt as to the weight to be given to the expressions of the Branch Committee members. He reminded the Body that he had not voted in favor of the worldwide survey and then, sharply increasing the force of his tone, asked: "Where does all this information come from anyway? Does it come from the *top down*? Or from the *bottom up*?" He said that we should not build our decision around the situations found in different countries.

As noted, this phrase regarding "top" and "bottom" was not new to me. As recently as 1971 in a *Watchtower* article, Fred Franz had used it, along with reference to the "rank and file" members of the organization. But the whole tone of the discussion was extremely upsetting to me, particularly such expressions as "If *we* allow the brothers this latitude." When recognized by Chairman Klein, I reminded the members that it was the Governing Body's decision to write the Branch Committee members, that those men were among the most respected elders in their respective countries, and if we could not give weight to their expressions then to whose expressions could we do so? I felt compelled to add that my understanding was that we considered ourselves as a ***brotherhood*** and had no reason to look on ourselves as the "top" of anything, that we should even find the concept personally repelling.

What, then, was the final outcome? At the October 11, 1978, meeting, of the sixteen members then on the Body, thirteen were present and nine voted for a change in the traditional policy, four (Henschel, Jackson, Klein, and Fred Franz) did not. This not being a two-thirds majority of the total membership, no change was made. On November 15, the vote showed eleven of sixteen in favor of a change, a two-thirds majority. The motion voted on was one of several suggested and happened to be one I had submitted. It read:

MOTION

> That where the superior authorities in any land, acting through whatever constituted agency they use, order a brother to perform some form of work (whether because of his conscientious objection to military service or for other reasons), there will be no congregational action taken against such a brother if he submits to that order, provided always that the work he is ordered to do is not in violation of direct commands or clear Scriptural principles found in God's Word, including that at Isaiah 2:4.—Matt. 5:41; 22:21; 1 Cor.13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:17; Titus 3:1; Acts 5:29.
>
> We will continue to exhort our brothers to guard against becoming a part of the world and that in whatever circumstances they find themselves they must keep God's kingdom foremost, never forgetting that they are slaves of God and of Christ. Thus they should seek to avail themselves of any provision that allows them the greatest freedom to use time, strength and funds for that Kingdom.—John 15:17-19; Acts 25:9-11; 1 Cor. 7:21, 23.

A two-thirds majority had voted in favor of the motion—but the two-thirds majority did not last long. During a momentary break in the session, a member remarked that there evidently was going to be a change in the vote. He quoted President Franz (who was among those not favoring any change) as saying, "It isn't over yet; Barry has had second thoughts." Lloyd Barry had been among the eleven voting in favor of the motion. Why the change? Since the decision could make the difference between men going to prison or not going to prison, I think it is enlightening to realize just what sort of things can happen in a religious governing body holding power to affect the lives of thousands of persons.

You will note that in the cited texts at the end of the first paragraph of the Motion the citation "1 Cor. 13:1-7" appears. I had meant to put "Rom. 13:1-7" but, perhaps because of familiarity with Paul's well-known description of love in First Corinthians chapter thirteen, I mistakenly wrote it down as I did. Someone called the matter to my attention during the intermission and the Body was informed of the need to correct this one reference.

When we reconvened, however, Lloyd Barry stated that he would not vote in favor of the motion with Romans chapter thirteen listed in the citations. Given the opportunity to speak, I suggested to Lloyd that we could simply eliminate the reference completely or even remove *all* the cited texts if need be to make the motion acceptable for him. Without explaining the basis for his

objection, he said he would still not vote for the motion and that he was withdrawing his previous vote. Other members endeavored to find some conciliatory adjustment but were unsuccessful. Though no provision had existed for withdrawal of one's vote after a motion had passed, we acceded to Barry's action. The two-thirds majority was gone. After further discussion, when another vote was taken it read: Nine in favor, five against, one abstention.[40] Though still a definite majority it was no longer a *two-thirds* majority. Though only a *minority* of the Governing Body favored the continuance of the existing policy and the sanctions it applied toward any who accepted alternative service (unless sentenced thereto), that policy remained in effect. Year after year, hundreds of men, submitting to that policy although neither understanding it nor being convinced of its rightness, would continue to be arrested, tried, and imprisoned—because one individual on a religious council changed his mind. Witness men could exercise their conscientious choice of accepting alternative service only at the cost of being cut off from the congregations of which they were a part, being viewed as unfaithful to God and Christ.

Surely such instances make clear why no Christian should ever be expected to mortgage his conscience to any religious organization or to any body of men exercising virtually unlimited authority over people's lives. I found the whole affair disheartening, tragic. Yet I felt that I learned more clearly just to what ends the very nature of an authority structure can lead men, how it can cause them to take rigid positions they would not normally take. This case illustrated the way in which the power of tradition, coupled with a technical legalism and a mistrust of people's motives, can prevent one from taking a compassionate stand.

The matter came up on one other occasion and the vote was evenly split. Thereafter it was dropped and for most members it seemed to become a non-issue. The organization, following its voting rules, had spoken. The Branch Committees' arguments need not be answered—they could simply be informed that "nothing had changed" and they would proceed accordingly. The men in prison would never know that the matter had even been discussed and that, consistently, half or more of the Governing Body did not believe they needed to be where they were.

40 Lloyd Barry had left on some business matter and so was not present for this vote made necessary by his withdrawal of his previous vote. The five voting against change were Carey Barber, Fred Franz, Milton Henschel, William Jackson and Karl Klein. Ted Jaracz abstained. See also *Crisis of Conscience*, page 135..

Illustrating the frequent flaw of inconsistency found in such reasoning is the way a parallel issue was later handled. It originated in Belgium, the country from which the whole issue of alternative service had arisen. The Belgian branch office asked for a ruling on another issue. Belgian law provided for the selecting and assigning of certain persons, generally attorneys, to serve at voting locations during political elections, to assure that the voting procedures were carried on properly. The Branch Committee wanted to know if this was permissible for Witness attorneys. Remarkably, the Governing Body ruled that to serve in this manner would not disqualify one as an approved Witness—though it is difficult to imagine an assignment that would place one in closer contact and involvement with the political process than this.

Generalization and Categorization

Another hallmark of thinking legalistically is the practice of generalizing and categorizing. That is, because *certain* aspects of a matter are bad the tendency is to generalize by saying that the *whole thing* is bad.

This is essentially the same kind of unwarranted generalizing which categorizes a whole national or racial group as contaminated because a percentage of individuals within that group or race are guilty of some wrongdoing or wrong attitude. By this generalizing, people of such nationality or race are viewed as criminally inclined, or dishonest, or lazy and unreliable, or greedy and crafty, simply because the whole is judged on the basis of the part. Prejudice is the result and it betrays shallow thinking. It takes care and judgment to estimate people as individuals, person by person. Lumping them all together in a single category is obviously easier. It is also grossly unfair and illogical.

In Governing Body discussions I began to realize to what extent decisions were based on a similar kind of unwarranted generalizing and categorizing. In so many of the "policies" developed, focus was placed on organizational membership rather than on what an individual actually did or was. If some fault could be found with a part of a particular organization's practices or standards, often the whole organization—and everyone in it—was condemned and viewed as a "taboo" area for Witnesses.

This approach allows for viewing all other professed Christian religious affiliations as intrinsically bad. By finding fault with

certain of the religion's teachings, the religion *in its totality* can now be viewed as unclean, and any person affiliated with it is also unclean, outside God's favor. This approach makes even membership in the Y.M.C.A. a disfellowshiping offense.[41] The fact that I think there is something unchristian in a religion hardly gives me the right to judge all its members as totally unacceptable to God. This is following the principle of "guilt by association," a principle that was used against Jesus by religious leaders. (Compare Matthew 9:11; 11:19.) Following this principle, it does not matter what kind of person *the individual* may be, what his personal beliefs are, how much devotion he personally shows to God's Word, how high the standards are by which he lives. Unless he ceases affiliation with any of such religious groups—and takes up membership within Jehovah's Witnesses—he will be destroyed by God at the time of the "great tribulation." Paradoxically, when individuals associated with Jehovah's Witnesses find some of their own organization's teachings to be unscriptural or its practices to be unchristian, they are told that they should not be overly critical, should not expect perfection, should stick with the organization, "waiting on God" eventually to clear matters up.

Generalizing and categorizing are particularly prominent in matters of employment, as has been seen. In many cases, the factor that determines whether a particular employment is ruled "acceptable" or not is—not what the work performed actually is—but whether it is supervised by, paid by, or performed on the property of, a religious organization or a military organization.

At Romans chapter thirteen, verse 4, the apostle Paul wrote of the "superior authority" of government:

> It is God's minister to you for your good. But if you are doing what is bad, be in fear: for it is not without purpose that it bears the sword; for it is God's minister, an avenger to express wrath upon the one practicing what is bad.

The "sword" of the superior authority in Paul's day was the military, for there was no separate police force operative in his time. The purpose of the Roman army in Palestine was to maintain the Pax Romana, and in doing so it served particularly as a force for peace and order, taking action against lawbreakers. It may be noted that in Paul's own experience it was the military that rescued him from the angry mob in the temple area. It was the mili-

41 The *Watchtower*, January 1, 1979, pages 30 and 31.

tary that protected him from an assassination plot and provided him safe conduct to Caesarea.[42] To this day, military forces often are more active in maintenance of law and order in times of crisis than they are in warfare. In the Dominican Republic during my years of service there, many occasions arose when the danger of riots and violence got beyond police control and it was the military forces that were then brought in to serve as the prime peacekeepers. While one may rightly feel conscientious objections to the wrongs involved in military aggression and bloodshed and to participation in these, that does not justify a refusal to recognize any beneficial service performed by military forces or provide the basis for categorizing everything connected with the military as inherently, automatically and totally bad, so that any contact therewith is contaminating, making one bloodguilty.

The same is true of politics. It is easy to convert this term into a synonym for all the unsavory aspects appearing in human rule. The divisiveness and selfish ambition typical of much political campaigning, with its slurs and smears, along with the hypocrisy, corruption, and tyranny that are all too often to be found in political systems, can be used by this equation to classify as automatically bad anything to which the term "political" can be attached. It is this same blanket condemnation and categorization that produced the organization's policy in Malawi with its calamitous results.[43] But politics basically means *government* and the Scriptures teach that government definitely has a beneficial aspect.

According to Watch Tower policy, if a Witness were ordered by the government to serve as the *secretary* of some government-arranged community administration (as took place in the Philippines with its system of *barangays*), he must refuse, even at the risk of fine or imprisonment, to avoid disfellowshipment.[44] This is difficult to harmonize with the attitude of Daniel and his three companions during the political rule of the Babylonian and Medo-Persian empires. Not only did Daniel accept appointment to a high position in the Babylonian political structure, he actually requested administrative positions for his three friends.[45] This was not some display of a lack of integrity, for they proved themselves willing to face death rather than be disloyal to God. (Daniel 3:8-18) In the

42 Acts 21:35-40; 23:16-35.
43 See *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 145-148.
44 This issue came up in the Phillipines in 1973 when a number of Governing Body members (myself included) attended an assembly there during a tour of the Orient.
45 See Daniel 2:48, 49; 5:29.

matter of serving in the governmental (political) structure, they showed *conscientious discrimination*—not *blanket categorization*. Christians today can also reject the bad and shun it while still recognizing whatever good there may be. I could not conscientiously share in political campaigning with its divisive, aggressive tactics. Yet that does not cause me to view anything as automatically and intrinsically evil simply because it bears the name "political."

With regard to Daniel and his three companions, there is additional evidence of their ability to distinguish what was truly an issue and what was not. This is in connection with the names that were assigned to them by the Babylonians. If not in all, then at least in some cases those names included the names of Babylonian gods.[46] Nebuchadnezzar himself is shown as specifically saying of the name assigned to Daniel, Belteshazzar, that this was "after the name of my god." (Daniel 4:8, 9) Bel (corresponding to the Canaanite term Baal), was a chief Babylonian god. I seriously doubt that any of Jehovah's Witnesses would have responded if addressed by a name assigned him by a pagan source and having any connection whatsoever with the name of a false god. Yet the accounts in the book of Daniel show that, when addressed by these names, Daniel and his three companions did not refuse to reply.[47]

I think of this when recalling some of the extreme measures Witnesses have felt obliged to take to demonstrate "strict neutrality," "complete separateness from the world," primarily as a result of the organization's highly sensitizing them by its categorizing policies. There is an inordinate concern for how things will *appear*, rather than what the reality is. In the modern state of Israel, Witnesses who refused military service were imprisoned. They were issued military clothing to wear. Whatever the *appearance* may have been, the *reality* was that they were prisoners due to their stand. Nonetheless, they refused to wear the garments and some even went around in their underclothes rather than put on such clothing. One Governing Body suggestion was that they might wear it turned inside out to register their objection. Yet how much more is a *name* viewed as an identification than is a uniform, and Daniel's responding to the name Belteshazzar could not but come to mind. He knew that this appellative did not change what he was and, when a genuine issue arose, was willing to *demonstrate* what he was, though it meant facing death in a den of lions. (Daniel 6:6-

46 Daniel 1:6, 7. See *Insight on the Scriptures* under "Belteshazzar," "Shadrach," "Meshach" and "Abednego."

47 Daniel 3:13-18; 4:19.

23) Had he been governed by Watch Tower indoctrination and policy, he surely would have not displayed such a balanced, discerning viewpoint.

Somewhat related is the way in which the Watch Tower organization now uses abstention from celebration of various holidays (or even birthdays) as evidence of superior righteousness. I still am not a celebrator of those holidays, yet I recognize that an exaggerated importance has been attached to them, with celebration or non-celebration being viewed as determining whether one is a practicer of pure worship or is worthy of disfellowshipment.

Much is made of the "pagan origin" of various practices and items connected with some of the holidays.[48] Yet, realistically, any "pagan" significance these may once have had has long since disappeared. I remember in the 1970s giving a talk that discussed the need not to go overboard in these matters, pointing out, among other things, that the very days of the week (in English) involve the names of pagan objects of worship, the sun, the moon, and of the gods and goddesses Twi, Woden, Thor, Frei and Saturn. The same is true of many of the names of months.[49] Yet today we employ those names without the slightest thought of their "pagan origin." Actually, most persons are totally unaware of their "pagan" source. This is similarly true of the various decorations and customs connected with many holidays.

While placing intense emphasis on the "pagan origin" factor, the Watch Tower organization simply glosses over this in other areas, as in the use of wedding rings. Their own publication, *What Has Religion Done for Mankind?* (1951), pages 276, 277, quotes Catholic cardinal Newman as saying that, along with such things as the use of temples, incense, candles, etc., "the ring in marriage" is among those things that are "of pagan origin, and sanctified by their adoption into the Church."[50] Yet almost all of Jehovah's Witnesses use the "ring in marriage," something their own publication reveals as "of pagan origin."

I recall that when the Watch Tower Society purchased a former motion picture theatre in Queens, New York, for use as an assembly hall, the theatre had an ancient Egyptian motif throughout. Over the marquee, the front of the building had large tiles depicting

48 See the Watch Tower publication *School and Jehovah's Witnesses* (1983), pages 18-20.
49 These include use of the names of the two-faced god Janus, Februa (a pagan feast of purification), Mars (god of war), and Maia (a Roman goddess).
50 *Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, John Henry Newman (1878), pages 355, 371, 373, Edition of 1881.

various Egyptian gods and goddesses, one even carrying the *crux ansata*. The inside contained other items, including lotus flowers, having religious connotations in Egyptian beliefs. When the Watch Tower renovated the building all these items were left unchanged. After a few years, a friend of ours from the Dominican Republic attended a Gilead School graduation there as our guest. She was struck by the pagan symbolisms and expressed her upset feelings to me, saying that she would not have known what the meaning of these things was had she not read of them in the Watch Tower's own publications.[51] She could not harmonize the strong, negative statements made in the publications with this apparent tolerance. I felt obliged to write to President Knorr, pointing out that my concern was primarily for her (and others who might feel as she did). Knorr came down to my office and argued the matter, saying that the items were simply decorations and that, for example, he didn't think persons looking at the lotuses would attribute a sexual connotation to them. He asked if I thought that we could not even make use of a Catholic translation because it might have a cross on its front. I told him that I myself was not hypersensitive about such things, but that I thought we had an obligation to be concerned if there is an adverse effect on others, that if we set forth a particular standard for others then people have a right to expect us to live by it ourselves. Not long afterward the tile depictions of gods and goddesses were painted over. The inside of the building remained essentially the same. More recently the Watch Tower purchased the large Bossert Hotel in Brooklyn. It has gargoyles ornamenting the outside. These, too, are viewed by the organization as inconsequential decorations, void of any serious significance. As I found true in so many cases, stringent requirements placed on Witnesses of the "rank and file" suddenly seemed capable of great relaxation when the organization's own interests were involved.

Persons among the Witnesses have been disfellowshiped for holding birthday celebrations. The core of the Watch Tower argument seems to be based upon the principle of guilt by association—that because only Pharaoh and Herod are mentioned in Scripture as celebrating birthdays, and because these were wicked men, therefore the celebration of a birthday is necessarily wicked also.[52] This is certainly a forced conclusion. If, as an illustration, the Scrip-

51 See, for example the book *What Has Religion Done for Mankind?* pages 106 to 119.

52 See *Reasoning from the Scriptures* (1985), pages 68, 69; *School and Jehovah's Witnesses*, page 17, 18.

tures had no reference to marriage feasts other than marriage feasts held by two pagans or non-Christians (perhaps even with some coincidental drunkenness or immorality occurring)—would that make marriage feasts something wrong, unfit for Christians?

The Watch Tower employs quotations about the absence of birthday celebrations by Jews or by professed Christians in early centuries. Is that really a substantial reason for taking a rigid stand? Did the Jews or the professed Christians in early centuries celebrate wedding anniversaries? Would the fact that they did not rule out our doing so today? Jehovah's Witnesses in many countries regularly *do* celebrate wedding anniversaries. The idea advanced that birthday celebrations are intrinsically an 'idolizing' of the person is an unrealistic categorization. Couples who celebrate a wedding anniversary are not idolizing themselves nor idolizing their marriage. Like so many other things, it is the *way* in which things are done, the *spirit* shown, and this can vary widely.[53] Nowhere in the Scriptures is there any indication of God's disapproval of birthday celebrations *per se*. They are silent in that respect. It is a case of men presuming to know God's thinking and making judgments and rulings that God himself has not made.

In all this I am not advocating any of these celebrations. I simply believe that, viewed calmly and factually, they are matters of minor significance, never warranting the sense of superior righteousness produced by Witness abstention, and certainly never justifying the policy of disfellowshipment now in force. The mere fact of knowing that something is not condemned does not make it appealing. I myself am basically repelled by the shallowness and commercialism of many holidays. I have negative feelings about the practice of having a child "make a wish" while blowing out candles (as is done in this country) since that fosters a superstitious view, or bringing in such fictions as Santa Claus. Yet I believe that for me to attribute such grave seriousness to these matters as though of life-and-death importance and to judge others on that basis would be to go beyond what Christian teaching authorizes.

In its absolutist approach and categorizing practice, a paradox is found in that Watch Tower organizational policy allows mem-

53 One of my wife's sisters has a son, an only child conceived fairly late in the marriage and born with a heart defect. The parents were warned that he might not live beyond the age of two, but surgery performed when he reached that age corrected the problem. As the mother said, "Some people celebrate wedding anniversaries, but to my husband and me the day that our son was born is more precious to our memory even than the day of our wedding."

bership in labor unions. Yet the organization knows that labor unions are clearly a strong political force. It condemns participation in strikes as being a form of coercion by intimidation; it rules that anyone holding an official position in a union is "not exemplary," hence could not be an elder or ministerial servant; it declares picketing to be unchristian—yet, strangely, says that if, on refusing picketing work, the Witness is directed to do substitute work ("alternative service"?) of cleaning the union hall or answering telephones there, this is up to his conscience.[54] Why is such service in substitution for picketing not viewed in the same way that work in substitution for military service has been? And why, with all these claimed "unchristian" aspects, does membership in the union not make the Witness laborer unclean, tainted? How does the Watch Tower Society get around the evident contradiction in policy? It does this by simply telling Witnesses that they can look on union membership as a form of "job insurance"! Yet they could not look on membership in the Y.M.C.A. and use of its exercise or swimming facilities as "health insurance," or, in the case of Malawian Witnesses, the holding of a party card as "home insurance," or even "life insurance."[55]

Once again, it is a case of religious leaders dictating to the individual as to when he or she may hold mental reservations and when not. (Compare Matthew 15:3-9.) The Governing Body is willing, for legal benefits, to classify the Witness organization as "hierarchical," though outside of the courts it would deny that as being the case. This is certainly a seeking of accommodation by a measure of compromise. Compromise is not something necessarily or inherently wrong. It implies a degree of yielding, and life demands certain compromise on the part of all of us in order to live

54 The suggested *Correspondence Guidelines*, after citing Ephesians 6:5-8; Colossians 3:22-24; and 1 Peter 2:18, 19, says, "Labor unions do not agree with the counsel set out in these scriptures and do not act in harmony with it." Later it says, "A united wage demand is a club, a threat to the employer of a severe economic blow if he does not do what is demanded. It is a means of obtaining something from an unwilling employer by intimidation." This same material discusses picketing and substitute work in place thereof. See also the *Watchtower*, February 15, 1961, page 128.

55 For the destruction of Witness homes and loss of life in Malawi, see *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 112 to 116. It would seem likely that the organizational position on labor unions is due to their playing such a major role in the employment field. To take a stand consistent with their views regarding other objectionable organizations and require that all Witnesses renounce union membership would undoubtedly create a major unemployment problem and severe economic difficulties for thousands of Witnesses. The organization has no real arrangement for caring for its members in such circumstances, particularly in the industrialized nations. Whatever the case, the policy demonstrates that, when it wishes to, the organization can make remarkable exceptions and dispensations.

and work with others. The wrong comes when we begin to compromise our principles. The organization accords to itself the right to present itself to the world in a form it elsewhere strongly condemns, and not view this as a compromise of principle, but denies to its members the corresponding right to decide what they can do in good conscience when faced with circumstances equally, or even more, difficult for them. The view the religious leadership chooses to take regarding a matter is imposed on all below as the view they must take. The fact that the Governing Body members in their cloistered, protected, "ivory tower" circumstances rarely have to face the difficulties, hardship or problems that the ordinary Witnesses must face, seems to have no cautionary or restraining effect on their readiness to impose their views on the individual members.

Setting Double Standards

Yet another common failing seen in religious legalism is the existence of double standards—the setting of one set of standards for yourself and another for others. As Jesus said of those who, in effect, seated themselves in Moses' seat by acting as advocates of the Mosaic law:

> Therefore all the things they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds, for they say but do not perform.[56]

The evidence of that attitude was one of the more disturbing factors for me as a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses. In *Crisis of Conscience*, I set out a few examples of the application of double standards.[57] They formed only part of the whole.

Consider, for example, these quotations dealing with honesty in business:

> Do we really respect the truth, or are we willing to twist the truth a little bit, to get out of an inconvenient circumstance, or to get something we want? Lying is a common practice in business today. . . . Do you, in a tight spot, feel a temptation to lie as the easy way out?[58]

56 Matthew 23:3, *NW*.
57 See *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 142-171.
58 The *Watchtower*, January 15, 1974, page 58.

> Sometimes what we have to say to another has to be put in writing. For some reason, individuals who would never lie orally feel that it is a different matter when reporting income for taxes or writing an itemized declaration for customs agents at an international border. This cheating costs all taxpayers. Is that real love of neighbor? Besides, do not Christians have an obligation to "pay back Caesar's things to Caesar"? . . . Unscrupulous men may resort to double-talk to misrepresent and deceive.[59]

> Paul continues: "Render to all their dues, to him who calls for the tax, the tax; to him who calls for the tribute, the tribute." (Romans 13:7) The word "all" embraces every secular authority that is God's public servant. There are no exceptions. Even if we live under a political system that we personally do not like, we pay taxes. . . . no Christian should illegally evade paying taxes.[60]

Truly all this sets a high standard. I recall a letter sent to the headquarters from Italy on this issue. It stated that in that country the practice of understating business profit was so common and widespread that it was a government practice to *automatically* adjust tax returns by adding a certain percentage to the amount reported. The question was asked if, in view of this, it was required for a Witness in business to state the actual amount of his business income—knowing it would be taken as too low—or if it was up to him to decide how to report it so as to pay what the tax laws actually called on him to pay. The Governing Body ruled that the matter was not up to the individual and that the full amount must be reported. (Articles in the *Watchtower* magazine in the section "Questions from Readers" have similarly set out very stringent standards on such matters and Witnesses failing to adhere to these are subject to discipline, in some cases to disfellowshipment.)

I have no question whatever as to the importance of the principle of honesty, or to the praise given it in the articles above quoted. What I *do* question is whether it was up to a religious council to dictate to the individual in specific and unusual circumstances and, in effect, tell him how his conscience should react. One reason for feeling this way was knowledge of the organization's own practices in such areas.

As one example, the Branch Committee in Colombia, in preparation for an annual "zone visit" of a headquarters representative, made up a list of questions to which they sought answers. Some involved their concern about certain accounting policies that the organization had established and which they were following. Thus

59 The *Watchtower*, February 15, 1988, page 4.
60 The *Watchtower*, November 1, 1990, page 24.

the sixth question on the list dealt with the branch's reporting of certain income to the government as "donations," while showing it on their books for the Society as "investment returns." They felt disturbed about this and this photocopy of their material shows how they explained their feelings:

> 6. According to Colombian law for non-profit corporations we are prohibited from making loans on which interest is charged. Doing so would classify us as a commercial firm and liable to pay corporate taxes at the rate for limited partnerships. At the moment we classify the income from Hall loan repayments, which includes interest, as donations for purposes of reporting to the government on our tax return. However, on the Society's books this income is classed as investment returns, #7A, and on the individual loan ledgers the payments on principal and interest are clearly identified. Could we have your comments on the moral aspects of this procedure?

Their seventh question dealt with a similar juggling of information regarding foreign missionaries that had been introduced into the country:

> 7. We have work contracts with our missionaries and certify them as employees to the government Ministry that deals with foreigners. We must do this in order to get them into the country. However on our tax returns we show that we have no employees. This is to avoid paying employer contributions to social security, etc, and to avoid problems with intricate fringe benefits required by law. "Everybody does it," but how do we stand morally?

In both cases it may be noted that the reason for their "irregular" method of reporting to the government was the evasion of certain taxes or other expenses. While the principle that Christians obey all laws except those in violation of God's law is a true one, that principle could not justify failure to comply with these Colombian tax laws.[61] Again, it should be noted that these accounting methods did *not* originate in the Colombia branch office. On the basis of personal knowledge, both from having served as branch overseer in Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, as well as from having made official visits as a Governing Body member to branch offices in many countries, I know that no branch establishes its own accounting policies. They are all determined by the central headquarters organization. The branch in Colombia was simply conforming to Watch Tower Society practices employed in other countries as well. They did not feel that they could deviate from such practices without first obtaining permission, as their questions show. But, as indicated by their expressions, the men at the branch felt conscientiously disturbed as to the morality of the

61 Acts 5:29; compare Romans 13:5-7.

practices, doubtless because of contrasting them with the published statements in the organization's *Watchtower* magazine. To my knowledge, the practices set out were not changed.

The second item from Colombia, shown above, touches on another inconsistency. As is well known, many people from Mexico cross into the United States as illegal aliens, seeking work and improved living conditions. Social security cards are obtained based generally on false information. Some of these persons thereafter have lived in the country for decades, lived responsible lives, raised families, bought or built homes, even developed businesses. Some of these later become Witnesses, at times many years later.

The organization's policy has permitted those wishing to be baptized as Jehovah's Witnesses to do so. But males among them were not permitted to serve in any responsible way, either in the conducting of meetings, or as "ministerial servants," or elders.[62] The view taken was that "they are living a lie." They misrepresented themselves as if legally in the country and carried documents that were not genuine. To qualify for any responsibility they must go to the authorities and seek to legalize their situation. Otherwise the only other way to qualify would be to return to Mexico—which normally meant giving up their jobs, or business, selling or otherwise disposing of their homes and property if they owned such.[63]

Yet the organization *has itself* set up certain arrangements which produce a similar situation of illegality. At times the Watch Tower Society has faced legal barriers in its efforts to send its trained missionaries into certain countries, in South America, Europe, Africa and the South Pacific. The particular country may refuse to grant entry visas or perhaps residence visas to Watch Tower missionaries. The Watch Tower's sending in of missionaries in these instances is not usually because there are no Witnesses in the country, but because of wanting to send in personnel that the organization has more directly trained in its teachings, policies and methods. The work or worship of Jehovah's Witnesses is not dependent on their introduction into the country, but the organization believes that this will usually result in more rapid numerical growth or in more efficient handling of a branch office.

Frequently the organization has made arrangements with a Witness in the country who has a business or industry and he has

62 See, for example, the *Watchtower*, March 15, 1977, pages 191, 192.

63 At the very same time this policy was in effect, as is documented in *Crisis of Conscience*, Witness men in Mexico were carrying documents stating that they had fulfilled a military service that they had not fulfilled, documents obtained through a bribe, and many of them were knowingly approved by the organization as elders, circuit overseers, even as branch office representatives. The charge of "living a lie" was never leveled at them.

provided a letter or document affirming that the particular missionary (who is not identified as such in the document) is being hired to work for his firm. Or a Witness connected with a firm that is not in that country, but which has international trade or dealings, may provide such a letter or document, stating that the individual will serve as the representative of such firm in the country targeted. The missionary, and his wife, if married, may go to the country as non-Witnesses and, after arrival, may purposely (and according to organization instruction) stay away from meetings and association with Witnesses (except perhaps some assigned "contact" person). Then, after a certain time, and making use of a visit from Witnesses going door to door in their area, they act as if they are now becoming interested in the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses and soon begin to attend meetings. It is not long before they are working in the branch office or in some other capacity—all made successful by this pretense. I know personally of such cases, as for example, in the country of Portugal.

In other cases, after arrival in the country the missionary will report to the documented place of business for one day only and not go back again, now spending his entire time in his missionary activity. Or, if supposedly representing a foreign firm (centered outside the country) he may make occasional reports of business contacts of a very perfunctory kind, all to keep up appearances.

Another method, used in some South American countries, has been for the missionary to apply for entry as a student, going to study at a university in the country involved. Upon arrival, he or she will take the absolute minimum of classes required and spend all the rest of the time in witnessing activity or other activity designed to advance the organization's interests.

Still others go into a country presenting themselves as "tourists," and every six months or so they leave the country through one frontier city and, after a day or two, reenter the country through the same city or one nearby. Some foreign Watch Tower representatives in Spain and Mexico have lived in those countries for decades by using this method, during all those decades continuing to represent themselves as "tourists," though often employed full time at Watch Tower Branch offices.

In all cases, these arrangements are worked out by the Watch Tower headquarters organization, not at the initiative of the individual missionary.

The reason for discussing these practices is not because of any interest in judging the ethical or moral nature of the practices *of themselves*, or the individuals involved. What disturbs me is, once

again, the *double standard* applied, where the organization takes on itself the right to judge the morality of a practice when carried on by "ordinary" people (and their qualifying for appointment as exemplary persons), but considers itself above criticism or condemnation when doing the same thing in order to advance "organizational interests."

Whichever of the above methods are employed, the Watch Tower representatives are, and realize that they are, living in such countries under false pretenses, contrary to the laws of the land. A laborer in Mexico who might feel desperate about the poverty-stricken situation of his wife and children and who entered the United States illegally and obtained work by representing himself as there legally, was classified as "living a lie," and could not, upon becoming a Witness, serve in an exemplary way in the congregation. But the organization could send its own representatives into a country (perhaps the same country from which the laborer came, Mexico), in a way that either violates the law or at least circumvents it through misrepresentation, with the representative acting out a role that is not authentic, not in accord with fact, and this is viewed as proper; it is in the interests of the Society and its expansion. It is as if a lower standard of conduct is permissible and acceptable in religious operations and activities than would be counted acceptable in secular matters. The position seems to be that the end justifies the means as long as the end is one pursued by the organization, not one sought by an ordinary person. The scales of justice are thus weighted one way when measuring the righteousness of others, the opposite way when measuring your own.[64]

Similar examples of inconsistency may also be found even in Watch Tower counsel given Witnesses, including young people, who are to testify under oath before a court. The legal department of the Society now supplies a brochure to Witnesses who are faced with child custody cases (the opposing mate in such cases generally being a non-Witness). The brochure of more than 60 pages supplies guidelines to Witness parents, their children and their attorneys, as well as local elders and others who may testify, by reviewing difficult questions that may be presented by the opposing side and then offering suggested sample responses. Recalling the *Watchtower* article on honesty cited earlier, we may remember that it asked:

> What about truthfulness? Do we really respect the truth, or are we willing to twist the truth a little bit, to get out of an inconvenient circumstance, or to get something we want?

64 Proverbs 20:23.

Compare that with some of the responses suggested in the Society's manual. Under "APPROACH BY *WITNESS PARENT* TO CROSS-EXAMINATION," we find this question and suggested answer (page 12):

> *Will all Catholics (or other) be destroyed?*
>
> Jehovah makes those judgments, not we.

This sounds good, implies freedom from a dogmatic, judgmental attitude. Yet the Witness so responding knows that his organization's publications clearly teach that only those who are in association with "Jehovah's organization" will survive the "great tribulation," and that all those who fail to come to that organization face destruction.[65]

In all the above examples cited—regarding business and financial practices, entry into foreign countries, or court testimony—there is no interest on my part to hold up any one method or practice discussed for condemnation. The issue is that of double standards. In our human imperfection every one of us at some time fails by applying one standard for ourselves and another for others. It is to be hoped that we beg God's forgiveness and try not to repeat the wrong. We are all guilty at times of being inconsistent in our reasoning. Again, it is to be hoped that we try to learn from our mistakes, correct our thinking, exercise more care not to be dogmatic about our reasonings.

I believe, however, that to promulgate *worldwide* organizational standards that are clearly unequal, maintain them for decades toward millions of people, while *condemning* any who do not observe them as unchristian wrongdoers, surely must carry a more serious accountability before God. I cannot believe that He who notes even the sparrow's fall does not take into consideration whatever unnecessary anxiety, despair, suffering or loss such policies may cause. I cannot believe that He overlooks as inconsequential the weakening effect on people's attitude toward his Word that such unequal policies can have, the perverting and stifling effect they can have on conscience and the destructive effect they can have on Christian freedom.

65 The February 15, 1983, *Watchtower*, for example says (page 12): "Jehovah is using only one organization today to accomplish his will. To receive everlasting life in the earthly Paradise we must identify that organization and serve God as part of it." The September 1, 1989, *Watchtower* on page 19 says: "Only Jehovah's Witnesses, those of the anointed remnant and the `great crowd,' as a united organization under the protection of the Supreme Organizer, have any Scriptural hope of surviving the impending end of this doomed system dominated by Satan the Devil."

9

Blood and Life, Law and Love

The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.—
2 Corinthians 3:6*, New Revised Standard Version.*

WHAT IS now discussed is not to imply in any way that the use of blood is not without its degree of risk. That there is risk is a simple fact. Nor does it in any way imply that the person who makes a personal, uncoerced choice to avoid transfusions (or any acceptance of blood components and fractions, for that matter) on purely religious grounds is acting improperly. Even acts that are proper *in themselves* become wrong if done in bad conscience. As the apostle puts it, "Consider the man fortunate who can make his decision without going against his conscience. . . . every act done in bad faith is a sin."[1] Whether, in view of the evidence that will be presented, certain scruples regarding blood reflect a weak or a strong conscience, I leave to the reader to judge.

At the same time, the seriousness of an organization's responsibility in imposing its views on an individual's personal conscience in such critical matters should never be underestimated. What has happened with the Watch Tower Society in the field of blood illustrates forcefully how legalism can lead an organization into a morass of inconsistencies, with the possibility of its members suffering whatever unfavorable consequences result.

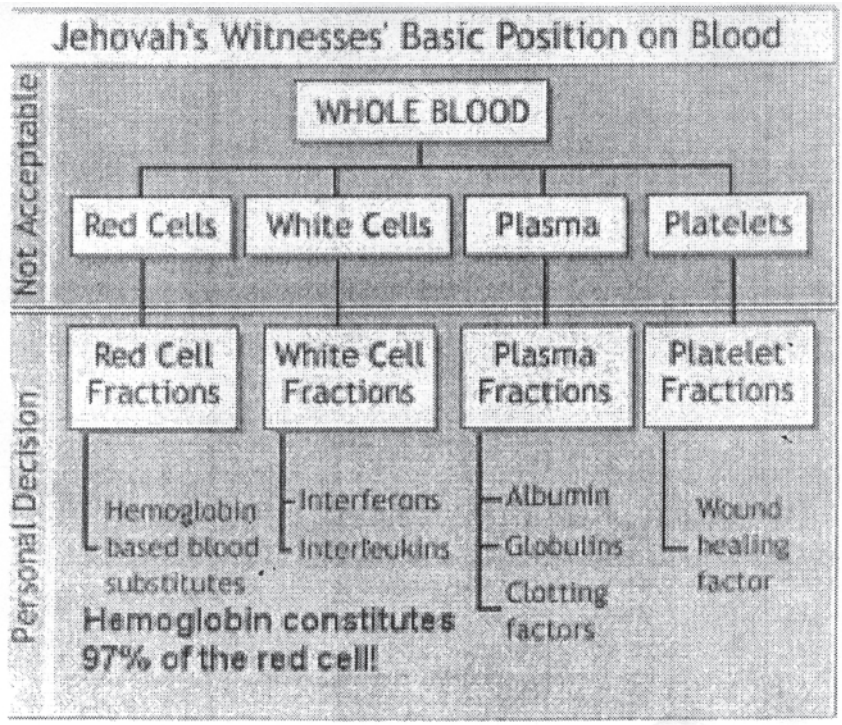
Starting in the late 1940s, the organization initially declared an outright ban on the acceptance of blood in any form, whole or fractional. Then, over the years, it added on new rulings that have entered into more and more technical aspects of the issue.

The latest ruling on blood fractions is that made in the *Watchtower*, June 15, 2000, pp. 29-31 and June 15, 2004, pp. 14-23, 29-31. This ruling deals with a new definition of what can be allowed as far as blood components are concerned. It is now claimed that four "primary components"—red cells, white cells, platelets and

1 Romans 14:22, 23, *JB*.

plasma - are forbidden but that "fractions" derived from all four "primary components" are tolerated.

The following chart basically presents the current position of the organization on the use of blood:



This position, specifying "Not Acceptable" blood elements (upper section) and elements left to "Personal Decision" (lower section), is spelled out in the *Watchtower* magazine of June 15, 2004. Analyzing the article and its reasoning, a correspondent from Sweden writes:

> This means that the blood parts given the green light in earlier articles can now be explained as being merely "fractions" of the plasma. The obvious achievement is that the earlier approved parts of the blood (globulins, albumin, clotting factor VIII etc.) can be reduced in significance compared to red and white blood cells and platelets. Thus the inconsistency of the earlier position in differentiating arbitrarily between various blood components is now removed for the submissively trusting Witness. The Society had difficulty dealing with this inconsistency when challenged.[2] The solution to its dilemma of necessity had to involve new compo-

2 See the Appendix (for Chapter 9) for more information on these earlier rulings.

nents, such as "fragments" of red and white blood cells and platelets, specifically mentioned. Such tolerance, now clearly expressed, had been out of the question earlier. Since a refined red blood cell in the form of hemoglobin freed from its membrane is well under way—PolyHeme, Hemospan and Hemopure to name some of the promising products—the new position of the Society may have far-reaching consequences for the Witnesses. They may very soon be able to receive what for all practical purposes are red blood cells.

Apart from the latest green light for a number of new components, the understanding of "primary components" versus "fractions" of such had played absolutely no role when the earlier permitted blood components were gradually tolerated. It is now used as a rationalization only afterwards. A long list of other explanations have been given instead, one of which was clearly unworthy and some of which would have done away with all objections to the medical use of blood, if taken to their logical conclusion. Referring to "Luke 6:1-5" in the *Watchtower*, June 15, 1978, p. 31, was particularly disastrous. The text refers to David and his men who ate forbidden bread—not some allowable fractions of them, but loaves of whole bread! If that could legitimate taking in some blood components it certainly could legitimate the use of all components and even whole blood. As that Biblical account about David and his men shows, *need*, not *quantity*, was then the determining factor. [That the Watch Tower Society still finds the argument in the June 15, 1978, *Watchtower*, cogent is apparent by the fact that it refers to it as recently as 2004 (see Questions from Readers" *Watchtower* June 15, 2004, p.30).]

The new position since 2000 is arbitrary and out of harmony with the facts. For one, it is claimed that the Bible forbids taking in the "primary components" but that "fractions" of them are tolerable since the Bible "does not give details." (The Watchtower, June 15, 2000, p. 30; June 15, 2004, p. 30) But since the Bible does not speak of "primary components" any more than it speaks about "fractions", this argument is false. In fact, it would be more logical to tolerate even the so-called "primary components" and draw the line between them and whole blood. For another, one reason constantly used when forbidding medical use of blood is the claim that only one use of blood was tolerable, that of using it for atonement on the altar. The blood, it is claimed, belongs to God. But that is conveniently forgotten when the use of blood "fractions" is pronounced tolerable! But it would hardly do to accept for any secular use what exclusively belongs to God, because that would be the same as using stolen property! A stolen car is a stolen car and it would not make the theft more tolerable

if the car is separated into "primary components," say the motor, coach and the transmission, and then separated further into "fractions" such as carburetor, pistons, hood, doors and drive shaft. Only if the car is *not* stolen would one have the right to take it apart and use or sell it as small parts. And if the car is not stolen, *all* parts, both big and small, can properly be separated and used at will. So if blood "fractions" can be tolerated, certainly the "major components" and even whole blood can!

Then the Society's classification of "primary components" does not seem to fit what medical science says. That is no wonder, for albumin , Factor VIII and IX etc. are complete and functioning components just as are red cells , white cells and platelets. All these components are carried in the plasma. The fact that some components (red cells, white cells and platelets) can be separated from the plasma by centrifugation and others only by different means does not actually make these latter components "fractions" of the plasma more than the others. Red cells and albumin proteins are not comparable to "uncles" and "nephews" but rather are "siblings"! It would take fractioning of an albumin protein to match a fraction of a red cell. Not surprisingly, a medical authority like *Modern Blood Banking and Transfusion Practices* by Denise M. Harmening (4th edition, Philadelphia 1999) includes Albumin, Immunoglobulin as well as Factor VIII and Factor IX among "the major components" of blood and no mention is made of the specific classification now made by the Society. (pp. 237-240, 246-248) Similarly, the Swedish Handbook *Blodsjukdomar Handbok I Hematologi* by Gösta Garthon & Bengt Lundh, 1999 (*Blood Diseases Handbook of Hematology*), includes Albumin and Coagulation Factors among "some important components in the blood," again without using the classification made by the Society. (p. 422) Clearly the explanation given by the Society in this regard is untenable. There is no room for differentiation between blood components, making some tolerable and others not.

But there is more. The *Watchtower*, June 15, 2000 and June 15, 2004, claims that "blood fractions" like immunoglobulins "move from a pregnant woman's blood to the separate system of her fetus" and that some Christians "may conclude that since blood fractions can pass to another person in this natural setting, they could accept a blood fraction derived from blood plasma or cells." (pp. 30,31) The problem here is that not only can "fractions" per the Society´s definition "pass into another person" in this natural setting, but "primary components" according to their definition can as well! Thus *Modern Blood Banking and Transfusion Practices* by Denise M. Harmening, quoted above, says on p. 423:

"Transplacental hemorrhage of fetal RBCs into the maternal circulation occurs in up to 7.0 percent of women during gestation." So red blood cells can "pass into another person" naturally. That would make red blood cells just as acceptable as immunoglobulins. Again the position of the Society is demonstrably untenable.

What about the "fractions" of red cells that may be available soon and that the Society now has given the green light? Such a "fraction" is just a slimmed red cell, the vital oxygen-carrying hemoglobin freed from the bladder it is capsuled in. Says the Swedish standard work *Människokropen Fysiologi Ochanatomi* ("The Human Body Physiology and Anatomy") by Jan G. Bjålie, Egil Haug, Olav Sand, Öystein V. Sjaastad (Stockholm 1998): "The red blood cells...can best be compared with small bladders , filled with the oxygen-binding molecule hemoglobin ...It is hemoglobin that gives the blood its red color. The hemoglobin make up 95% of the proteins of the erythrocytes and about 34% of its weight. The rest of the proteins are mainly enzymes participating in the energy turnover in the cells." (p. 269)

Whether the new products will be PolyHeme or Hemospan the vital part will be hemoglobin taken from red cells from human blood. If Hemopure will be available it will be based on hemoglobin from bovine blood. It will be a good product that can last long, unlike stored red cells, and it will be free from contamination. It will be able to carry oxygen around satisfactorily, unlike Dextran and other so called blood substitutes used to expand the blood. But it IS BLOOD! It is just as much blood, just as much a red blood cell as a peeled orange is still an orange. With or without the peel an orange is still an orange. If a method to remove the segments of an orange and arrange the segments in groups of four without peel is invented, the product will still be orange, and nobody would call it anything else. In the same way slimmed red cells, freed and prepared hemoglobin, will remain blood. Therefore, to say that taking in red blood cells is a sin while accepting the freed vital hemoglobin is not is downright Pharisaic hypocrisy.

Realizing that this conclusion is difficult to avoid, the *Watchtower*, June 15, 2004, p. 24, stated: "Some products derived from one of the primary components may be so similar to the function of the whole component and carry on such a life-sustaining role in the body that most Christians would find them objectionable." So it is considered a conscience matter to accept products made of red blood cells although it is said that "most" Jehovah's Witnesses will regard these as objectionable. A Witness who accepts such red blood cell products is considered to be in good standing. A Witness who accepts unprepared red blood cells, on the other hand —even if

only such are available—will be considered a sinner that will have trouble with his or her local elders. Clearly Watch Tower credibility is now zero.

The use of blood components ("fractions") obviously implies *storage of large, even massive, amounts of blood.* On the one hand the Watch Tower organization decrees as allowable the use of these blood components—and thereby the storage involved in their extraction and production—while on the other they state that they are opposed to all storage of blood as Biblically condemned. This is the *sole basis* they give for prohibiting the use of autologous blood by a Witness (that is, the person's having some of his own blood stored and then returned to his blood stream during or following surgery).[3] Clearly, the positions taken are arbitrary, inconsistent and contradictory. It is difficult to believe that the formulators, and also the writers of explanations and defenses, of such policy are so ignorant of the facts as to fail to see the inconsistency and arbitrariness involved. Yet that alone could save the position from also being termed dishonest.

To rule in matters of health and medical treatment—prohibiting this, allowing that—is to tread on dangerous ground. In the one case we may prove guilty of creating an irrational fear, and in the other we may create a false sense of security. The course of wisdom—and humility—is to leave the responsibility to decide on such distinctions where it belongs in the first place, with the conscience of the individual.

The risk inherent in transfusion of blood and blood components or fractions is real. At the same time it is also true that people can die in surgery due to massive hemorrhaging. The use of one's own blood, stored until time of surgery, would logically appeal to persons concerned about the possibility of blood-related infections. Yet the organization assumes the authority to declare this outside the realm of personal decision, prohibiting even an "intraoperative collection" of blood (where, during the surgery, some blood is drawn off into a plastic container and later returned to the body).[4] And many thousands of persons are willing to relinquish the right to make their own decision in such crucial matters, allowing an organization to decide for them, even though its history is one of unwillingness to acknowledge its responsibility for damage that its policies may produce.

3 The organization's position on this is spelled out, with much technical detail and reasoning, in the *Watchtower* of March 1, 1989, pages 30 and 31.]

4 See *Awake*! June 22, 1982, page 25.

Fed almost entirely only those statements and experiences that are favorable, they are rarely, if ever, told of negative factors.

Consider just one example, taken from an article in *Discover* magazine of August, 1988. Beginning at age 42, a Witness woman had had surgical removal of recurring bladder tumors over a period of several years. This last time she had waited overly long to see her doctor, was bleeding heavily, and was severely anemic. She insisted that she was not to receive a transfusion and this refusal was respected. Over a period of a week urologists tried unsuccessfully to stem the bleeding. Her blood count continued to drop. The doctor writing the article describes what took place:

> Gradually, as her blood count dropped further, Ms. Peyton became short of breath. The body's organs need a certain amount of oxygen to function. That oxygen is carried from the lungs to the periphery by hemoglobin molecules in the red cells. . . . The medical team gave Ms. Peyton supplemental oxygen through a mask until she was breathing virtually pure O^2. The few red cells she had were fully loaded—but there just weren't enough vehicles left to transport the fuel her body needed.
>
> Her hunger for air increased. Her respiratory rate climbed. She became more and more groggy, and finally—inevitably—the muscle fibers of her heart declared their desperate need for oxygen. She developed crushing, severe chest pain.

The doctor writing the article relates her feelings on arriving at the patient's room:

> As I walked into the room. . . I was awed by the scene in front of me. At the center of everyone's attention was a large woman with an oxygen mask, gasping for air, breathing faster than seemed humanly possible. At the head of the bed were three friends, fellow church [Witness] members, coaching her. . . . At her side were several doctors—one monitoring her falling blood pressure, another coaxing some blood from an artery. The fluid that slowly filled the syringe had the consistency of Hawaiian Punch; tests on the same revealed a red cell count of only 9 [normal would have been 40]. Hanging from the bed rail was a bag of cherry-red urine. The woman was dying. Her cardiogram tracings showed the deep valleys that signal a heart in pain. Within a matter of hours the damage they represented would become irreversible.

The woman went into cardiac arrest. A team of doctors and nurses began cardiopulmonary resuscitation, administered epinephrine and atropine, then an electrical jolt to the heart. It fluttered into activity, then stopped again. More CPR, more epinephrine and atropine, another electrical jolt, more CPR. This went on for one hour until there was no longer any hope or purpose. The patient was dead beyond recovery.

The physician describing this did not characterize the woman as simply a fanatic. She writes:

> She was an intelligent woman, I was told, who totally understood the implications of her decision. But her judgment, it seemed to me, arose from a blind spot imposed by her faith.[5]

Here was a woman who had a recurring problem requiring periodic surgery. Knowing this, storing some of her own blood might have appealed to her as a safe, advisable procedure. "Theocratic law," however, ruled this out. Obedience to "Theocratic law" left her no personal choice in the matter.

If the organizational policies were truly Biblically based, then whatever suffering that might result from adhering to those policies—such as a damaging postponement or avoidance of surgery due to concern or uncertainty about blood issues, even actual loss of life because of feeling under divine obligation to reject any but the "permitted" blood components—all could be viewed as simply the suffering a servant of God must be willing to face.[6] Many of Jehovah's Witnesses are very sincere in holding to the standards of their organization in this regard. Some have even seen their young children die as a result and it would be cruelly unjust to imply that this is due to any lack of parental love on their part. They simply have accepted that the organizational standards and policies—however complex, or even confusing—are Biblically founded and hence God-ordained. Yet few claims were ever more weakly based.

5 Elisabeth Rosenthal, article titled "Blinded by the Light," *Discover* magazine, August, 1988, page 28-30.

6 My wife nearly bled to death in 1970 when her platelet count dropped from the normal range of 200,000 to 400,000 per cubic millimeter down to about 15,000 per cubic millimeter. After days of severe hemorrhaging, she was hospitalized at a Brooklyn hospital and both she and I made clear our rejection of platelets or any other blood-derived products (including those that have since been organizationally decreed "allowable"). Fortunately, after a two-week stay and continuing prednisone therapy, she recovered basic health. What I state in this book, then, is not evidence of any personal reluctance to face loss if I believed that adherence to God's will called for it.

As noted, much of the Watch Tower's argumentation centers around texts in the Hebrew Scriptures, largely from the ordinances of the Mosaic law. Since the Society recognizes that Christians are not under that Law, the text at Genesis chapter nine, verses 1-7, is frequently cited. It says:

> And God went on to bless Noah and his sons and to say to them: "Be fruitful and become many and fill the earth. And a fear of you and a terror of you will continue upon every living creature of the earth and upon every flying creature of the heavens, upon everything that goes moving on the ground, and upon all the fishes of the sea. Into your hand they are now given. Every moving animal that is alive may serve as food for you. As in the case of the green vegetation, I do give it all to you. Only flesh with its soul—its blood—you must not eat. And besides that, your blood of your souls shall I ask back. From the hand of every living creature shall I ask it back; and from the hand of man, from the hand of each one who is his brother, shall I ask back the soul of man. Anyone shedding man's blood, by man will his own blood be shed, for in God's image he made man. And as for you men, be fruitful and multiply and become many, make the earth swarm with you and become many in it.

It is claimed that, since all humans descend from Noah and his sons, these commands still apply to all persons. It is implied that the ordinances on blood in the Mosaic law are therefore to be viewed as simply repetitions of or elaborations on the basic law set forth earlier and hence still having force. Otherwise, since Christians are not under that Mosaic law, there would be no purpose in citing texts from it as having relevance in the issue.[7] The divine decree regarding blood stated to Noah is claimed to be eternal in application.

If that is so, then should this not be equally true of the accompanying command to "become fruitful and become many," to "make the earth swarm with you and become many in it"? And if this is the case, how can the Watch Tower Society possibly justify its encouraging, not only singleness, but even childlessness among those Witness members who are married? Under the heading "Childbearing Today" the March 1, 1988, *Watchtower* (page 21) says that, in view of the "limited time" remaining to get the preaching work done, "It is, therefore, appropriate for Christians to ask themselves how getting married or, if married, having children will affect their share in that vital work." It acknowledges that

7 Roman 6:14; 10:4; Hebrews 8:6, 13.

childbearing was part of God's command following the Flood, but states (page 26) that "Today, childbearing is not specifically a part of the work Jehovah has committed to his people. . . . So the matter of childbearing in this time of the end is a personal one that each couple must decide for itself. However, since 'the time left is reduced,' married couples would do well to weigh carefully the pros and cons of childbearing in these times." If Jehovah's words to Noah regarding childbearing and 'swarming fruitfulness' can be thus set aside as no longer applicable, how can it consistently be argued that His words concerning blood must be viewed as remaining in force, and also use that as a basis to justify the application of ordinances in t*he Mosaic law* regarding blood as in force for Christians today?

More significant, however, is that those words in Genesis are made to say something quite different from what they actually say. Any reading of the text will make plain that God there speaks of blood entirely in connection with the *killing* of animals and subsequently with the *killing* of humans. In the case of the animals, their blood was poured out in evident acknowledgment that the life *thus sacrificed* (for food) was only taken by divine permission, not by natural right. With man, the shedding of his blood called for the life of the one doing the shedding, human life being God's gift and nowhere authorized by Him to be taken at will by men. The shed blood of slain animals and of slain humans stands for the life they have *lost*.[8] The same is true with regard to the Mosaic law texts regularly cited requiring that blood be "poured out." In all cases, this clearly refers to the blood of animals that have been *slain*. The blood represented life taken, not life still active in the creature.[9]

Blood transfusions, however, are not the result of the killing of either animals or humans, the blood coming from a *living* donor who continues to live. Rather than representing someone's *death*, such blood is employed for the very opposite purpose, namely the *preservation* of life. This is said, not to pronounce blood transfusions as a desirable practice or as having unquestionable propriety, but simply to show that there is no real connection or true

8 Contrary to the Watch Tower's claims, in the Scriptures blood, by itself, consistently represents—not life—but *death*, figuratively standing for the life *lost* or *sacrificed*. Compare Genesis 4:10, 11; 37:26; 42:22; Exodus 12:5-7 (compare this with 1 Peter 1:18, 19); Exodus 24:5-8; Matthew 23:35; 26:28; 27:24, 25, and so forth. Only when it is functioning as part of a *living creature* then blood can be said to stand for life or the living "soul."

9 Leviticus 17:13, 14; Deuteronomy 12:15, 16, 24, 25.

parallel between the Genesis mandate regarding slaying and then eating the blood of the animal slain, and the use of blood in a transfusion. The parallel is simply not there.

In December of 1981, a man then studying with Jehovah's Witnesses wrote to the Watch Tower Society, expressing his difficulty in harmonizing the policy on blood transfusions with the scriptures cited as basis. His discussion of the texts reveals conclusions similar to those just presented:

> Thus, these passages quoted above seem to indicate to me that the prohibitions against eating blood in the Bible, refer only to the situation where man kills the victim and then uses the blood without returning it to God, who alone has the right to take life.

I was especially impressed, however, with this expression, made toward the close of his letter:

> Another point in regard to this same subject that has bothered me is that Jehovah's Witnesses say that God prohibits eating blood because it symbolizes life, which is of high value in the sight of God, and that he wishes to impress upon man the value of life through the prohibition of eating blood. And this seems very reasonable to me. <u>However, I fail to see how the symbol could be of greater value than the reality it symbolizes</u>.
>
> Admittedly, in most cases, blood transfusions are of little value or actually harmful, yet in a very small percentage of cases, blood is the only possible means of sustaining life until other treatment can be given, e.g., massive internal bleeding that cannot be immediately stopped. It seems to me that in this type of situation to let a person die <u>in order to keep the symbol of life</u> is a contradiction in itself and <u>a placing of more importance upon the symbol than the reality which it symbolizes</u>.
>
> . . . I believe as firmly as Jehovah's Witnesses do that a true Christian should be prepared to give his life for his faith in God, if he is called upon to do so. But to give one's life when God does not really require or desire it, would not seem to be of any real value.[10]

Finally, to use laws commanding the *pouring out* of blood as basis for condemning *storing* of blood is to ignore the stated *purpose* of those laws. According to the context, Israelites were commanded to pour out the blood of slaughtered animals to insure that the blood was not *eaten*, not to insure that it was not

10 As one person put it , to place the symbolic importance of blood over that of life itself is somewhat like a man's placing more importance on his wedding ring (symbolic of his wedded state) than on his marriage itself, or on his wife. It is as if, faced with either the sacrifice of his wife or the sacrifice of his wedding ring, he would opt in favor of saving the wedding ring.

stored. Storage was simply not at issue. To employ such laws in the way that is done is both illogical and a pure manipulation of evidence, forcing a meaning on them that was neither stated or even implied.

Since Christians are not under a law code but under the "royal law of love" and the "law of faith," these points certainly merit serious thought and meditation.[11] Does it truly show appreciation for the preciousness of life to allow arbitrary policies to dictate in crucial situations? Does it manifest either love of God or love of neighbor to do this with no clear statements in God's Word for support?

Undoubtedly the principal Biblical text employed in the Watch Tower's argumentation is that at Acts 15:28, 29. These verses contain the decision of a council at Jerusalem and include the words, "keep abstaining from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication." The Scriptural evidence that this was not stated as some form of legally binding declaration is discussed later in this chapter. This matter is crucial since it is the prime basis for the Society's argument that the ordinances in the Mosaic law are transposable to Christianity. While this point is dealt with later, it may here be said that the exhortation to "abstain from blood" clearly relates to the *eating* of blood. The *Watchtower* of June 15, 1978 (page 23), in fact, quotes Professor Eduard Meyer as saying the meaning of "blood" in this text was "the partaking of blood that was forbidden through the law (Gen. 9:4) imposed on Noah and so also on mankind as whole." Such "partaking" was by *eating*.[12]

A major question, then, is whether it can be demonstrated that the transfusing of blood is an "eating" of blood as the Watch Tower organization claims. There is, in reality, no sound basis for such claim. There are, of course, medical methods of "intravenous feeding" whereby specially prepared liquids containing nutrients, such as glucose, are introduced into the veins and provide nourishment. However, as medical authorities know, and as the Watch Tower Society has at times acknowledged, a blood transfusion is *not* intravenous feeding; it is

11 Romans 3:27; 6:14; 10.:4; Galatians 3:10, 11, 23-25; James 2:8, 12.

12 The *Watchtower* of September 15, 1958 (page 575), states that "Each time the prohibition of blood is mentioned in the Scriptures it is in connection with taking it as food, and so it is as a nutrient that we are concerned with in its being forbidden." This still seems to be the basic position and so the Society still argues that a blood transfusion is the same as eating blood, taking it into the body as food.

actually a *transplantation* (of a fluid *tissue*), *not* an infusion of a nutrient.[13] In a kidney transplantation, the kidney is *not* eaten as food by the new body it enters. It remains a kidney with the same form and function. The same is true of blood. It is not eaten as food when "transplanted" into another body. It remains the same fluid tissue, with the same form and function. The body cells cannot possibly utilize such transplanted blood as food. To do this the blood would first have to *pass through the digestive system*, be broken up and prepared so that the body cells could absorb it—thus it would have to be actually and literally *eaten* to allow it to serve as a *food*.[14]

When medical practitioners believe there is need for a blood transfusion it is not because the patient is *malnourished*. In most cases, it is because the patient is lacking, not *nutrition*, but *oxygen*, and this is due to lacking sufficient carriers for transporting an adequate supply of oxygen, namely, the oxygen-carrying red cells of the blood. In some other cases, blood is administered due to need for other factors, as the need for clotting agents (such as platelets), immune globulins containing antibodies, or other elements, but again not as the means for providing "nourishment."

In its effort to get around the evidence that a blood transfusion is not eating, does not have as its design the "nourishing" of the body, the Watch Tower Society often tries arbitrarily to broaden out the matter by coupling, or even replacing, the term "to nourish" with the expression "to sustain life."[15]

13 *Awake*! October 22, 1990, page 9. In endeavoring to claim medical support for their view of transplanted blood as a "feeding" of the body, Watch Tower publications have always resorted to quotations from some medical source of an earlier century, such as the Frenchman Denys of the 17th century. (See, for example, the *Watchtower*, April 15, 1985, page 13.) They cannot quote a single modern authority in support of this view.

14 The Watch Tower Society has at times compared a transfusion with infusing alcohol into the veins. But alcohol is a very different liquid, already in a form that body cells can absorb as a nutrient. Alcohol and blood are completely different in this respect.

15 See, for example, the *Watchtower*, March 1, 1989, page 30; April 15, 1985, page 12. This diversionary tactic serves the sole purpose of confusing the issue. Nourishing the body by eating and the sustaining of life are not identical equivalents. Eating is only *one* of the means to sustain life. We sustain life in many other ways equally as vital, as through breathing air, through taking in water or other liquids, through maintaining body heat within a livable range of temperature, and through sleep or rest. In their references to blood, the Scriptures themselves deal, not with the broad aspect of "sustaining life," but with the *specific act of eating blood*, and clearly with the eating of blood of *animals that are slain*. When an Israelite ate meat containing blood, he was not dependent upon the blood to "sustain" his life—the meat alone would accomplish that just as well without the blood as with the blood. Whether his life was "sustained" by eating the blood or not was simply not at issue. The *act* of eating blood was prohibited, and the motivation or ultimate consequences of the eating were not dealt with in the laws on blood.

The muddling of the issue accomplished by the unwarranted insertion of the concept of "sustaining life" allows the Watch Tower organization to impose on its members the idea that anyone accepting a blood transfusion shows disdain for the life-giving ransom accomplished by the saving power of Christ's blood poured out in sacrifice. The duplicity in this line of reasoning is seen in that the blood fractions the Watch Tower organization *does* allow its members to receive, are often administered precisely to save or "sustain" the person's life, as in the case of Factor VIII, administered to hemophiliacs, or that of immune globulins, injected to protect against certain life-threatening diseases or to prevent the death of an infant due to Rh incompatibility.[16] It is unfair and unloving to impugn the motivation of those seeking to preserve their life, or the life of loved ones, because they do not hold to certain regulations and prohibitions originating with a religious organization, doing this by ascribing a denial of faith to their motivation when there is simply no valid basis, Scriptural or otherwise, for doing so. It is an attempt to burden them with a sense of guilt that is imposed by human standards, not divine standards.

'Abstain from Blood'

The letter sent out by the apostles and older men of Jerusalem, recorded at Acts chapter fifteen, uses the term "abstain" in connection with things sacrificed to idols, blood, things strangled and fornication.[17] The Greek term they used (*apékhomai*) has the basic meaning of "to stand off from." The Watch Tower publications imply that, with regard to blood, it has a total, all-embracing sense. Thus, the publication *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, page 216, says: "abstaining from blood' means not taking it into your body at all." Similarly the *Watchtower* of May 1, 1988, page 17, says: "Walking in Jesus' footsteps would mean not taking blood into the body either orally or in any other way." But does this term, as used in the Scriptures, actually carry the absolute sense these publications imply? Or can it instead have a relative sense, relating to a specific and limited application?

16 See, for example, the *Watchtower*, June 1, 1990, pages 30, 31. The apostle Peter states that Christ "bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2:24; *NRSV*; compare Isaiah 53:4, 5; Acts 28:27.) But this certainly does not justify implying that one's seeking to heal wounds or other physical ailments by medical means is tantamount to showing a lack of appreciation for Christ's healing power in these vital spiritual respects.

17 Acts 15:20, 29.

That it may apply, not in a total, all-embracing sense, but in a limited, specific way can be seen from its use in such texts as 1 Timothy 4:3. There the apostle Paul warns that some professed Christians would introduce teachings of a pernicious nature, "forbidding to marry, commanding to *abstain* [the same Greek word used here as at Acts 15] from foods which God created to be partaken of with thanksgiving." Clearly he did not mean that these persons would command others to abstain totally, in any way, from all foods created by God. That would mean total fasting and lead to death. He was obviously referring to their prohibiting *specific* foods, evidently those prohibited under the Mosaic law.

Similarly, at 1 Peter 2:11 the apostle admonishes:

> Beloved, I exhort you as aliens and temporary residents to *keep abstaining from fleshly desires*, which are the very ones that carry on a conflict against the soul.

If we were to take this expression literally, in an absolute sense, it would mean we could not satisfy any fleshly desire at all. That certainly is not the meaning of the apostle's words. We have many "fleshly desires," including the desire to breathe, to eat, to sleep, to enjoy recreation and a host of other desires, which are perfectly proper and good. So, "abstaining from fleshly desires" applied only *in the context* of what the apostle wrote, relating, not to all fleshly desires, but only to *harmful, sinful desires* which do indeed "carry on a conflict against the soul."

The question then is, *in what context* did James and the apostolic council use the expression to "abstain" from blood? The council itself specifically dealt with the effort of some to demand of Gentile Christians that they not only be circumcised but also "observe the law of Moses."[18] That was the issue the apostle Peter addressed, observance of the Mosaic law, which he described as a burdensome "yoke."[19] When James spoke before the gathering and outlined his recommendation of things the Gentile Christians should be urged to abstain from—things polluted by idols, fornication, things strangled, and blood—he followed this up by the statement:

> For from ancient times Moses has had in city after city those who preach him, because he is read aloud in the synagogues on every sabbath.[20]

18 Acts 15:5.
19 Acts 15:10
20 Acts 15:9-21.

His recommendation therefore quite evidently took into account what people heard when 'Moses was read' in the synagogues. James knew that in ancient times there were Gentiles, "people of the nations," who lived in the land of Israel, dwelling among the Jewish community. What had been the requirements placed upon them by the Mosaic law? They were not required to be circumcised, but they *were* required to abstain from certain practices and these are outlined in the book of Leviticus, chapters 17 and 18. That law specified that, not only Israelites, but also the "alien residents" among them should abstain from engaging in idolatrous sacrifices (Leviticus 17:7-9), from eating blood, including that of unbled dead animals (Leviticus 17:10-16), and from practices designated sexually immoral (including incest and homosexual practices).—Leviticus 18:6-26.

While the land of Israel itself was now under Gentile control, with large numbers of Jews living outside in various countries (those doing so being called the "Diaspora," meaning the "scattered [ones]"), James knew that in many cities throughout the Roman Empire the Jewish community was like a microcosm reflecting the situation in Palestine in ancient times, in that it was quite common for Gentiles to attend synagogue gatherings of the Jews, and thus to mingle with them.[21]

The early Christians themselves, both Jewish and Gentile Christians, continued to frequent these synagogue gatherings, even as we know that Paul and others initially did much of their preaching and teaching there.[22] James' reference to the reading in Moses in the synagogue in city after city certainly gives basis for believing that, when listing the things he had immediately before named, he had in mind the abstentions that Moses had set forth for Gentiles within the Jewish community in ancient times. As we have seen, James listed not only *the very same things found in the book of Leviticus, but even in the very same order*: abstention from idolatrous sacrifice, blood, things strangled (hence unbled), and from sexual immorality. He recommended observance of those same abstentions on the part of Gentile believers and the evident reason for this abstention was the circumstance then prevailing, that of an intermixture of Jew and Gentile in the Christian gatherings and the need to maintain peace and harmony within that circumstance. When Gentile

21 Compare Acts 13:44-48; 14:1; 17:1-5, 10-12, 15-17; 18:4.
22 Compare Acts 18:1-4, 24-28.

Christians were urged to 'abstain from blood,' this clearly was to be understood, not in some all-embracing sense, but in the specific sense of refraining from *eating* blood, something abhorrent to Jews. To take the matter beyond that, and to try to assign to blood *of itself* a sort of "taboo" status, is to lift the matter out of its Scriptural and historical context and to impose upon it a meaning that is not actually there.[23]

Notably, James did not list such things as murder or theft among the abstentions urged. Those things were already condemned as much among the Gentiles in general as among the Jews. But the Gentiles did condone idolatry, did condone eating of blood and eating of unbled animals and condoned sexual immorality, even having "temple prostitutes" connected with places of worship. The recommended abstentions, then, focused on those areas of Gentile practice that were most likely to create great offense for Jews and result in friction and disturbance.[24] The Mosaic law had *not* required circumcision for alien residents as a condition for living in peace within Israel and neither did James urge this.

The letter that resulted from James' recommendation was directed specifically to *Gentile* Christians, people "from the nations," in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia (regions stretching contiguously to the north of Israel) and, as we have seen, it dealt with the specific issue of an attempt to require Gentile believers to "observe the law of Moses."[25] It dealt with those areas of conduct most likely to create difficulty between Jewish and Gentile believers. As will be demonstrated later, there is nothing to indicate that the letter was intended to be viewed as "law," as though the four abstentions urged formed a "Quadrilogue" replacing the "Decalogue" or Ten Commandments of the Mosaic law. It was specific counsel for a specific circumstance prevailing at that period of history.

23 Here, again, if one assigned an *absolute* sense to the expression to 'abstain from blood,' viewing it as a some kind of blanket prohibition, this would mean that one could not submit to blood tests of any kind, could not undergo surgery unless it were of a bloodless kind, and in other ways would have to "stay away from" blood in every respect. The context gives no indication that such a blanket prohibition was intended and indicates instead that the injunction was directed specifically to the actual eating of blood.

24 As far back as April 15, 1909, the *Watch Tower* recognized this as the intent of the letter, saying (page 117): "The things here recommended were necessary to a preservation of the fellowship of the 'body' composed of Jews and Gentiles with their different education and sentiments."

25 Acts 15:5, 23-29.

Preferential Rulings

While on the Governing Body I could not help but feel that there is a measure of discriminatory application of policy, one favoring those in a professional position. Teachers may teach evolution as a subject, doing so from "a purely objective viewpoint" and preferably initially explaining to the class their differing viewpoint.[26] As has been seen, attorneys are allowed to serve at political election centers. Perhaps most notable of all, however, is that doctors may not only belong to medical organizations which approve of such practices as blood transfusions and abortion, but they are also told that they themselves may administer a blood transfusion to a patient who is not a Witness and who requests this.[27] This is rationalized on the basis of the Mosaic law's allowing Israelites to sell to foreigners meat from animals that had died unbled![28] Yet the blood in those animals was still in their bodies where it had been all along, it had not been extracted and stored—a process which the organization condemns as showing contempt for God's law.[29] All the intense urging to show "deep respect for the sacredness of blood," all the warning of bloodguiltiness attaching to any misuse of blood, all the argumentation condemning any storing of blood as showing contempt for God's laws, suddenly loses its force where such Witness surgeons are involved.[30]

In all sincerity, and with no desire to demean anyone, when reviewing all the various organizational ordinances, rulings, policies and technicalities that have been considered, I cannot but believe

26 This is discussed in the proposed *Correspondence Guidelines* under "Schools, Secular Education."

27 See the *Watchtower*, November 15, 1964, pages 682, 683; also the *Watchtower*, April 1, 1975, page 215, 216, on cross-matching blood for transfusions. The revised *Correspondence Guidelines* (as submitted) says the doctor or nurse may administer such transfusion if so "directed by a superior."

28 Deuteronomy 14:21.

29 It should be noted that the same *Watchtower* of November 15, 1964, also leaves as a matter of conscience a grocer's or a butcher's selling of blood sausage to "a worldly person." It would seem that, having decided to use of this portion of the Mosaic law to justify the lenient stand toward medical practitioners, the writer of the material felt also required to add this comment on grocers and butchers. However, once again, this is not selling meat from an unbled animal but the selling of a product made through the *collecting* and *storing* and *processing* of blood—elsewhere condemned by Watch Tower policy.

30 In the United States, Witness doctors and lawyers meet annually to discuss such matters as "confidentiality and privilege" in their relations with fellow Witnesses, and similar topics. I seriously doubt that any Witnesses engaged in occupations of lesser esteem could hold comparable gatherings without having these frowned upon or discouraged by the organization.

that if an individual were to use in the more "ordinary" affairs of daily life the kind of reasoning reflected in those positions and rulings, people would feel compelled to question that person's sanity.

Why Do People Accept This?

In the apostle Paul's day he spoke of those "who *want* to be under law." (Galatians 4:21) Many today still do. Unlike the Judaizers of Paul's day, men may not advocate submission to Mosaic law, but by a legalistic approach to Christianity they convert it into a law code, a body of rules. They create a form of bondage to regulations, traditional policies, and these govern people's relationship to God.

But why do others submit to such imposition? What is it that causes people to relinquish the precious freedom to exercise their own moral judgment, even in the most private areas of their lives? What causes them to submit to the interpretations and rulings of imperfect men, even at the risk of losing employment, suffering imprisonment, placing marriage relationships under great strain, even risking life itself, whether it be their own or that of a loved one?

Many factors enter in. There may be social and family pressures, with conformity as the way to avoid disagreement, even conflict. There can be the sheer, paralyzing fear of divine rejection and eventual destruction if one should wind up outside the organizational "ark." But there is another reason that is perhaps more basic, one that is often more at the very root of the matter.

Most people like things spelled out in black and white, like to have issues neatly catalogued for them as either right or wrong. Making decisions based on one's own conscience can be difficult, at times agonizing. Many prefer not to make that effort, prefer simply to let someone else tell them, be their conscience for them. This is what allowed for the development of rabbinical control and a body of rabbinical tradition in Jesus' day. Rather than decide something on the basis of God's Word and personal conscience, it was a case of "ask the Rabbi." Among Jehovah's Witnesses this has unquestionably become, "Ask the organization," or simply "ask Brooklyn."

Another reason is the subtlety with which such legal reasonings and interpretations are advanced and imposed. Religious emphasis on law, legalism, has consistently been marked by use of technicalities and sophistry, reasoning that is not only subtle but also plausible, sometimes even ingenious—and yet, false. To unravel

such reasoning and see it for what it really is takes effort, an effort that many do not care to make and that others simply seem unable to accomplish.

Consider just two examples from ancient rabbinical sources. In early times, "teachers of the law" endeavored to make the injunction at Exodus 16:29 ("Let nobody go out from his locality on the seventh day") more explicit. They ruled that on the sabbath a man could walk only a certain distance (somewhat less than 3,000 feet) from the outer boundary of his city or town. This was called a "sabbath day's journey" (an expression in use in Jesus' time; see Acts 1:12). Yet there was a way for a man to make a longer trip than this and, from the rabbinical standpoint, still be "legal." How?

He could, in effect, "create" a second domicile at some home or place away from his locality (but still within the 3,000-foot-limit) simply by depositing at that place on the day before the sabbath provisions sufficient for at least two meals. Then on the sabbath he could journey to that second "domicile" and then leave it and extend his trip an additional 3,000 feet.

The statement at Jeremiah 17:22, which forbids bringing any "load out of your homes on the sabbath day," was similarly amplified. The teachers of the law reasoned that there was no prohibition against carrying things *from one part of a house to another part*, even if the house were occupied by more than one family. So, they ruled that people living in houses within a certain sector (such as those living in houses built around a common courtyard), could construct a "legal" doorway for the whole section by erecting door jambs at the street entrance to the section, with perhaps a beam overhead as a lintel. Now, *the whole section was viewed as if it were one domicile* and things might be carried around from home to home within the area without violating the law.[31]

Compare now that method of reasoning and use of technicalities with the method the Watch Tower Society employs in applying its rules regarding certain aspects of medical practice. The March 1, 1989, *Watchtower*, in the "Questions from Readers" section, discusses the method of withdrawing blood from a patient some time before an operation and storing this for re-use during or following the operation. It then states categorically that Jehovah's Witnesses "DO NOT accept this procedure." The reason? The blood "is no longer part of the person." The text at Deuteronomy 12:24, is cited, which says

31 See *Judaism,* Vol. II, by George Foot Moore (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1954), pages 31,32.

that the blood of a slaughtered animal must be poured out upon the ground. By some reasoning this law regarding animal slaughter is viewed as presenting a parallel situation to the case of storing a living person's blood as just described.

But then the article goes on to discuss another method, where, during the operation, the patient's blood is diverted into a heart-lung pump or a hemodialysis machine (artificial kidney device) for oxygenating or filtering before returning into the patient's body. The article informs its readers that, unlike the other method, this method can be viewed as acceptable by a Christian. Why? Because the Christian can view it "as elongating their circulatory system so that blood might pass through an artificial organ," and thus feel that "the blood in this closed circuit was still part of them and did not need to be 'poured out.'"

How different is this technical "elongating" of the circulatory system from the rabbinical legalism that permitted the "elongating" of a sabbath day's journey's allowable distance through the technicality of an artificial second domicile? Or how is this classifying of the blood as being technically in a "closed circuit" different from the ancient legalism of making a "closed circuit" out of a number of houses by means of an artificial doorway? The same type of casuistic reasoning and legalistic use of technicalities is employed in both cases, ancient and modern.

In their own hearts, many Witnesses might feel that the first method, that of storing one's own blood, is really no more unscriptural than the second method, running the blood through a heart-lung pump and machine. Yet they are not free to follow their own conscience. An individual's life might lie in the balance, but the Watch Tower's interpretative reasonings and technicalities *must* be observed, for they are part of the "great body of Theocratic law." To fail to obey would be to risk disfellowshipment.

The Weakness of Law and the Power of Love

Law often produces an outward conformity that masks what people are inside. In Jesus' day, it allowed religious leaders, by their scrupulous 'living by the rules,' to "appear to people from the outside like good honest men, but inside *be* full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."[32] It works the same in our time.

Law, then, is least effective in those areas that are most intimately related to the heart. Law can identify and punish a thief. But it cannot do the same for the man who is law-abiding, but who

32 Matthew 23:27, 28, *JB*.

is also greedy, and whose greed and stinginess cause others to suffer. Law can condemn and even execute the murderer. But it can do little to prosecute the man who hates, who harbors jealousy, envy or rancor and who seeks revenge—particularly if he is careful to do so by "legitimate" means. I have known men of that kind, including men in high places.

We can see a striking contrast between the legalistic approach of control by "policy," rules and regulations, and the approach taken by the apostle Paul in his giving of admonition against wrongdoing. His appeal consistently gave primary emphasis, not to law, but to love. Thus, in his letter to the Romans, he writes:

> Do not you people be owing anybody a single thing, except to love one another; for he that loves his fellow man has fulfilled the law. For the law code, "You must not commit adultery, You must not murder, You must not steal, You must not covet," and whatever other commandment there is, is summed up in this word, namely, "You must love your neighbor as yourself." Love does not work evil to one's neighbor; therefore love is the law's fulfillment.[33]

Paul exemplified this approach in his handling of problems. One notable example is that of the issue of eating meats offered to idols (one of the four things listed in the letter recorded at Acts chapter 15). In Corinth, some Christians were even going to idol temples where such sacrificed meat was thereafter cooked and served up (for a price) in the precincts of the pagan temple. For a Christian to eat there was in the eyes of many of their fellow disciples—particularly those of Jewish background—undoubtedly comparable to the way Jehovah's Witnesses would view it if one of their members today were to share in a church supper, consisting of food earlier blessed by priests and served on grounds of St. Patrick's Roman Catholic cathedral in New York, with the money payment going to the church. Though the viewpoint might be comparable, the issue itself was far more serious. How, then, did the apostle deal with the matter?

Did he threaten those eating this meat by warning them of judicial proceedings and probable disfellowshiping? Was his appeal to law, a body of rules, as the means for curbing this practice? To the contrary he showed that the action *of itself* was not condemnable. But it could produce undesirable, even tragic consequences. Counseling on the basis, not of law, but of love, he wrote:

33 Romans 13:8-10, *NW.*

> It is easy to think that we "know" over problems like this, but we should remember that while this "knowing" may make a man look big, it is only love that can make him grow to his full stature. For if a man thinks he "knows" he may still be quite ignorant of what he ought to know. But if he loves God he is the man who is known to God.
>
> In this matter, then, of eating food which has been offered to idols, we are sure that no idol has any real existence, and that there is no God but one. . . . But this knowledge of ours is not shared by all men. For some, who until now have been used to idols, eat the food as food really sacrificed to a god, and their delicate conscience is thereby injured. . . . You must be careful that your freedom to eat food does not in any way hinder anyone whose faith is not as robust as yours. For suppose you with your knowledge of God should be observed eating food in an idol's temple, are you not encouraging the man with a delicate conscience to do the same? Surely you do not want your superior knowledge to bring spiritual disaster to a weaker brother for whom Christ died? And when you sin like this [that is, by a misuse of Christian freedom] and damage the weak conscience of your brethren you really sin against Christ.[34]

Whether one ate or did not eat would not depend, therefore, upon law and concern over being found guilty of violating law. It would depend upon love and concern not to harm one's brother "for whom Christ died"—truly a superior approach that caused the Christian to reveal what was in his heart, not simply his compliance with a rule.

That same counsel demonstrates as well that the apostle did not look upon the decision reached by apostles and others in Jerusalem (recorded in Acts chapter fifteen) as being "law." Had it been *law*, Paul would never have written as he did to Christians in Corinth, stating frankly that the eating of meats offered to idols was a matter of conscience, with the determining factor being whether the eating would cause others to stumble or not. To view the Jerusalem letter as law and, on this basis, to claim that its reference to blood indicates that Christians remain under the Mosaic law's ordinances regarding blood, is clearly to ignore the apostle Paul's statements, in the corollary matter of "meats offered to idols," showing that such reasoning is invalid. If no stumbling was probable, then no one could rightly judge Paul or any other Christian for eating such meat. As Paul states:

> For why should it be that my freedom is judged by another person's conscience? If I am partaking with thanks, why am I to be spoken of abusively over that for which I give thanks?[35]

With regard to sexual immorality (or "fornication" in some translations), also listed in the Jerusalem letter, the apostle nowhere presents this as something that might be either right or wrong de-

34 1 Corinthians 8:1-12, *PME.*

35 1 Corinthians 10:29, *NW.*

pending upon whether it might cause stumbling. He evidently viewed it as having no justifying factors. Yet, neither is a *legal ruling* presented as necessary for the Christian to recognize the need to avoid sexual immorality. As Paul observes at 1 Corinthians 6:13-19, if the person is guided by the law of love, he will find it inadmissible, recognizing it as a misuse of his body which is joined to Christ. (See also 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6.)

Christian freedom should never make one insensitive to the conscience and scruples of others. At the same time, no person has the right to impose his or her conscience on others, thereby placing limits on the freedom in Christ these enjoy. Nor does any group or select body of men, casting themselves in the role of exercisers of apostolic authority, have the right to impose their collective conscience on others, handing down decrees on that basis.

In the previous chapter the distinction between law and precept was given, the one deriving its strength through imposition by authority, the other conveying principles through teaching. Jesus regularly taught by parables, stories that laid out no laws but brought home forcefully precepts, vital moral lessons. The parable of the prodigal son does not set forth a *law* that one must take back one's wayward children, have a feast for them, and so forth. But it emphasizes a loving *spirit*, a generous, merciful outlook. In the Scriptures we find a combination of methods employed—there are positive injunctions, true, but there are also accounts setting forth approved *modes of life* (living in love, maintaining peaceful relations with others); there are responses to highly contextual questions; Paul, for example, answers a number of these but clearly does not do so as establishing *law*, but as giving sound, spiritual counsel, designed for the particular question at issue.

How Genuine the Unity Achieved?

It is true that by establishing a legal control over others a form of unity and order can be achieved. But how genuine is it? Is it not in fact a unity and order based on uniformity and conformity? On the other hand, does refusal to allow men to exercise—through their legalistic interpretation—control over one's personal life operate against true unity and cohesion? Does it mean that each person strikes out in his or her own direction, self-willed, self-sufficient, self-satisfied? It need not and *should* not—if the person genuinely accepts the headship of the One who gives such freedom.

Just as one cannot love the invisible God and at the same time hate his neighbor, so one cannot be joined with the invisible Son of God and be at odds with or disconnected from any and all others who are so joined and who humbly submit to the same headship.[36] According to the Scriptures, it is love, not organizational membership, that is "a perfect bond of union," for love is long-suffering, kind, not jealous, it does not brag or get puffed up or look for its own interests, but seeks the good of others.[37]

Love does not coerce people into a cohesive relationship; it warmly draws them together. Any claimed Christian unity founded on another basis is fictitious, not genuine, and can only be maintained by unchristian means.

The Blessing of Christian Freedom

An incredibly complex set of rules is operative today among Jehovah's Witnesses and it takes from them the exercise of personal conscience in a very wide area of life and conduct, makes them subject to an ecclesiastical legislature and supreme court composed of a few fallible men.[38] As a former member of that legislature and court, I am convinced that the root of all the problem lies in not recognizing the truth that, as Christians, we are no longer under law but are under God's merciful kindness through Christ. Through God's Son we can enjoy freedom from lawkeeping, rejoice in a righteousness that is the product, not of rule-keeping, but of faith and love.

The failure to appreciate this divine provision, the doubt that it is actually possible for an invisible Person to exercise effective headship and direction of his followers on earth without some highly organized, visible authority structure serving as a religious court, and the reluctance to believe that people can be protected against wrongdoing without being surrounded by a "fence" of laws, rules and decrees—this is what causes many, perhaps most, persons to be shocked at the thought of not being under law, to reject it as not only impractical but dangerous, pernicious, conducive to licentiousness. It makes them easily swayed and convinced by the arguments of those who wish to introduce and impose—to use the terms of the Watch Tower—a "legal arrangement of control," one that is humanly "enforceable" by a religious judicial system.

It is because God's holy Spirit given through Jesus Christ has superior force to that of law, through its power motivating the

36 1 John 4:20; 1 Corinthians 12:12-26; Ephesians 4:15, 16.
37 Colossians 3:14; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.
38 In a letter by Watch Tower attorney Leslie R. Long, dated March 29, 1987, he refers to a congregational judicial committee as "an ecclesiastical tribunal." If the term applies on the congregational level, it is far more applicable at the uppermost level, where the Governing Body functions as a supreme "ecclesiastical tribunal."

Christian to love of God and love of neighbor, that the apostle could say:

> But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under law. . . the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. Against such things there is no law.[39]

This is the grandness of Christian freedom, to know that one can enjoy the free and spontaneous exercise of those divine qualities with no religious authority having the right to step in and countermand expressions of love or kindness or gentleness or any other such quality. They can do this free from anxiety knowing that "there is no law," no set of rules to hobble them in doing what they are convinced in their heart of hearts is the right and good thing to do, the kind and loving thing to do, approved by God, even though disapproved by certain men.

Surely, then, our not being under law but under God's gracious kindness in no way minimizes our sense of responsibility as Christ's freedmen. In reality, it increases it. For we know that we must "talk and behave like people who are going to be judged [not by some law code or by a humanly imposed set of standards, but] by the law of freedom, because there will be judgment without mercy for those who have not been merciful themselves, but the merciful need have no fear of judgment."[40] That "law of freedom" is the one the disciple James had just mentioned in his letter as the "sovereign law" or "supreme law," namely, "You must love your neighbor as yourself."

There is a cleansing effect, a heart-strengthening effect, in knowing that our being pleasing to our heavenly Father will be determined, not by whether we have lived our lives according to law, a "body of rules," but whether we have lived them according to love. God's Son, our Head and Master, who grants us freedom from lawkeeping—and from human religious law imposers and law enforcers—exemplified that love for us. We therefore have no need to focus attention on committing to memory some complex set of organizational rules and policies or even to think in terms of law. Rather we focus attention on God's Son and what we have learned of him through God's Word and faithfully seek to exemplify his life in our own.

39 Galatians 5:22, 23, *NIV*.
40 James 2:12, 13 *JB*.

10

Shepherds of the Flock

If a certain man comes to have a hundred sheep and one of them gets strayed, will he not leave the ninety-nine upon the mountains and set out on a search for the one that is straying? And if he happens to find it, I certainly tell you, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that have not strayed.—Matthew 18:12.

SPEAKING OF his sheep, Jesus gave the assurance that they would "know his voice," adding, "A stranger they will by no means follow but will flee from him, because they do not know the voice of strangers."[1] In reading the Scriptures we do come to know the "voice" of the true Shepherd, learn to distinguish it from voices that do not ring true. His voice expresses itself in a way that harmonizes perfectly with the description he gave of himself in this call to his sheep:

> Come to me, all you who are toiling and loaded down, and I will refresh you. Take my yoke upon you and become my disciples, for I am mild-tempered and lowly in heart, and you will find refreshment for your souls. For my yoke is kindly and my load is light.[2]

Today, as in the past, there are people in many places who are leaving religious affiliations of long standing, doing so for the very reason that they do not hear the voice of the Good Shepherd in the proclamations of their respective religions, do not hear a call to refreshment and relief, but hear instead a strident call for total submission to human authority. The "voice" they hear is out of harmony with the instruction Christ gave his disciples, in saying:

> You know that in the world, rulers lord it over their subjects, and their great men make them feel the weight of authority; but it shall not be so with you.[3]

Sometime after I wrote *Crisis of Conscience*, a friend loaned me a copy of an earlier book with a notably similar title: *A Question of Conscience*.[4] The author, Charles Davis, had

1 John 10:4, 5
2 Matthew 11:28-30.
3 Matthew 20:25, 26, *NEB*.
4 I was unaware of this book at the time of writing my own, but had seriously considered using the same title.

been born in England of parents of the Roman Catholic faith. He states that, in his youth,

> . . . the claim of the Roman Church to be the one true Church was taken for granted as an assured fact. The Catholic Church remained for me right into adult life an unquestioned and unchangeable part of reality; it dominated my world.

From the age of fifteen he pursued an ecclesiastical vocation as his goal in life. Though our religious heritages seemed worlds apart—Jehovah's Witnesses resembling a small pond in contrast to the vast ocean of Catholicism—I felt a bond of mutual experience, having held those very same feelings regarding the religion of my heritage.

Charles Davis spent over twenty years in the priesthood and became the leading Catholic theologian of Great Britain, he traveled widely in giving lectures both in Britain and overseas. Then in 1966, he decided to leave the religion of his birth. Whatever other parallels with my own experience that had impressed me, it was in reading his *reasons* for taking this major step—abandoning a belief system and a religious career that had spanned his entire life—that I felt the closest affinity, felt most deeply moved. He wrote:

> I remain a Christian, but I have come to see that the Church as it exists and works at present is an obstacle in the lives of the committed Christians I know and admire. It is not the source of values they cherish and promote. On the contrary, they live and work in a constant tension and opposition to it . . . .
>
> For me Christian commitment is inseparable from concern for truth and concern for people. I do not find either of these represented by the official Church. There is concern for authority at the expense of truth, and I am constantly saddened by instances of the damage done to persons by workings of an impersonal and unfree system. Further, I do not think that the claim the Church makes as an institution rests upon any adequate biblical and historical basis.[5]

In a parallel way, it was not the realization that *errors* existed within the Watch Tower organization's teachings that most seriously affected me, for I did not feel that I could expect perfection when I myself was imperfect. It was primarily the *spirit* manifest that most deeply disturbed me. For I saw a similar "concern for authority at the expense of truth" and an accompanying "damage done to persons by workings of an impersonal and unfree system." Concern for authority clearly overshadowed concern for people.

5 Charles Davis, *A Question of Conscience* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1967), page 16.

There are among Jehovah's Witnesses, both in this country and in other countries, many, many persons for whom I feel true affection. I can honestly say also that there are those still associated with that organization whom I admire. But I admire them for what they are *as persons*—for I am convinced that they are what they are, not *because* of the organization in which they find themselves, but, in many respects, *in spite* of the organization. The qualities and spirit they themselves have are not reflective of that which comes down from the official organization. As Charles Davis put it, "it is not the *source* of values they cherish and promote" in their dealings with others. And their conscientious effort to hold to Biblical principles and exemplify Christian qualities often creates inner tensions for them for that very reason. They must, I believe, feel an uneasy sense of risk whenever they express themselves on certain issues.

What Kind of Shepherding?

In the Witness community, elders and others in positions of responsibility are told to be like the shepherd described in Jesus' illustration, quoted at the beginning of this chapter. That illustration conveys a beautiful picture, one of a shepherd's earnest concern for a single sheep, seen, not simply as part of a flock or as a mere number, but as an individual creature needing his help, care and protection. The description is in striking contrast to that given of religious shepherds of an earlier day, to whom the prophet Ezekiel addressed these words:

> You have not encouraged the weary, tended the sick, bandaged the hurt, recovered the straggler, or searched for the lost; and even the strong you have driven with ruthless severity.[6]

I have no question that most Witness elders believe themselves to be, and undoubtedly desire to be, like the first shepherd described. But I think that the evidence regrettably shows a high incidence of organizational policies producing a circumstance like that described in the second account, a circumstance where the sheep are consistently pressured by their shepherds, with even the strong being pushed at a demanding pace, but where very, very little time is spent aiding the weary, the sick, the hurt, the straggling and the lost among them. In congregation after congregation, it is a sad truth that members find that elders have little time to spend with them in periods of difficulty, illness, depression or discouragement, but that their time is spent primarily in pushing for

6 Ezekiel 34:4, *NEB*.

greater field service activity. They are "too busy" to provide strengthening and encouraging help but very prompt to act if there is any suspicion of misconduct and can then make available many hours for investigation or deliberation.[7]

The organization builds up a notable record each year of numbers of persons expelled, 36,638 being disfellowshiped in just the year 1985, with another 37,426 disfellowshiped in 1986.[8] Beyond doubt, a considerable percentage of these persons had engaged in practices of the kind the apostle describes in his exhortation at 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, practices such as fornication, theft, drunkenness, and similar immoral acts.

But while notable in its record of cutting such ones off, the organization's record of helping fellow Witnesses who slip into wrongdoing to *recover* and to *reform*—of demonstrating willingness not just to spend a few hours, but to give extended personal help over a period of weeks, or even many months if necessary, to build up their spiritual strength and aid them to become *healed*—is, by contrast, notably weak.

Problems among the youth of Jehovah's Witnesses are undeniably frequent and in case after case the "remedy" consists only of judicial hearings, not infrequently followed by disfellowshipment. The organization may justly recount specific instances of aiding persons "of the world"—drug addicts, violent or immoral persons—to leave a wrong path. That often comes as a result of meeting these people in the "field service." But once the individual takes the step of baptism, the willingness to spend any extended amount of time with him or her (time that is no longer reported as "field service") noticeably wanes. Thus the record of bringing former wrongdoers into the organization (thereby increasing the numerical size of the "flock") is considerably better than the record of helping those already in to remain spiritually strong, or to recover from a lapse into wrongdoing.[9]

This preoccupation with numerical increase is seen in the statement in the *1980 Yearbook* (page 11) that, "had it not been for disfellowshipings, the United States would have seen an increase of almost 3.5 percent [in 1979] instead of almost 1.5 percent." (That means that 2 percent of the total membership was disfellowshiped in that year.) What seems incredible is that the

7 Compare the exhortations at 2 Timothy 2:24-26; 1 Thessalonians 5:14, 15; 2 Thessalonians 3:13-15; James 5:16, 19, 20.
8 The *Watchtower*, January 1, 1986, page 13; January 1, 1987, page 13.
9 The "turnover rate" of members is unusually high, with large numbers leaving annually. For data see *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 36, 37.

factor the organization here focuses on is not the plight of the "lost sheep" but *the lower percentage of increase reported*! How utterly unlike the shepherd of Jesus' parable who was willing to leave the ninety-nine in his concern to rescue the one strayed sheep.[10]

Quick to Investigate, Slow to Help

I recall a letter that came to the Governing Body from a Witness whose husband, though baptized, had been "inactive" for two years. The couple went on vacation in a city noted for its gambling casinos and the husband indulged briefly in some games of chance. Word of this reached the elders and they summoned him to a hearing. They judged him "unrepentant" and disfellowshiped him. The wife, in her letter to the Governing Body, stated that her husband was "not a practicing gambler" (he had gambled on only one other occasion over two years previously), yet had been disfellowshiped. She compared this with her own situation stating that she herself had previously been guilty of an act of marital unfaithfulness. At first, she wrote, she was horrified at what she had done and was determined that she would never do such a thing again. But she did—and now clearly felt the need of help. She confessed her wrong to the elders, was deemed repentant and was given "reproof." The elders told her that they would meet with her each month to aid her in gaining spiritual strength. She wrote that after six months had passed she finally approached one of the elders and reminded him of this. His reply was that they had been "so busy," but that they would be spending time with her soon. The readiness to take "judicial action" toward persons is in strong contrast to the slowness in providing help, and this is demonstrably true on a broad scale in congregation after congregation.

When the Service Department Committee sent this letter to the Service Committee of the Governing Body, the comment was included that "people are being disfellowshiped for gambling when there is evidence that they are not really greedy persons." They added: "The question also arose as to why greed has only been used as a disfellowshiping offense when it comes to the matter of gam-

10 At a "morning text discussion" of the Brooklyn Bethel family, John Booth, a member of the Governing Body, commenting on the large number of persons who leave the organization annually (not necessarily due to disfellowshipment), said, "But that doesn't matter, for there are always new ones replacing them each year." John Booth himself was actually a kind person. Knowing him well, I believe that his expression simply reflects the viewpoint of the organization, a viewpoint that decades of association have embedded in his thinking: the important thing is increase, numerical increase.

bling. There are others who are far more greedy than an occasional gambler. . . . Yet the question is never raised as to whether they are greedy persons and should be called before a judicial committee."

Elders themselves have done some "soul-searching" due to the quickness of the organization to engage in a form of "police action" but its weakness to provide help on any kind of a continuing basis. One former elder and a Witness for over thirty years wrote to the Brooklyn headquarters on August 30, 1988. He expressed his personal sadness that the organization's description of shepherding by congregation elders as a source of "loving help" and "refreshment" simply did not fit the facts. Offering one case in point, he states:

> While serving as an elder in the Warrenton, Virginia Congregation, I went with the presiding overseer to investigate an alleged indiscretion reported via telephone from the elders of a neighboring congregation about an elderly, inactive, widowed sister, living in yet another congregation's territory, taking care of a comatose old lady for her livelihood.
>
> When we arrived, he questioned the sister about her supposed indiscretion [the charge was based purely on conjecture]. Her reply was, "It has been over seven years since my husband's death. I have become inactive and haven't attended meetings for years, and *not an elder has ever visited me*. Yet, recently you heard a rumor that I have done something wrong and you run down here ready to disfellowship me. I don't understand you brothers."

Due to the prevalence of such organizational attitude, and after having served for 24 years in various positions of responsibility, the writer of the letter resigned his eldership. In his letter of resignation he stated that he and his wife would appreciate the "Christlike love, consideration and support" of the congregation. He met with the visiting circuit overseer and the other elders in November, 1987, to discuss his resignation of eldership. Nine months later, in a letter to the Brooklyn headquarters, he states:

> From that meeting until this present date [August 25, 1988], not one of the elders, including W. Parkes [circuit overseer] during his subsequent visit to Warrenton, came to see us to give us any support, spiritually or otherwise.

Although the elders found no time to render any support or encouragement, after nine months of being virtually ignored he then received a phone call from them citing him for a judicial hearing. Rather than endure the emotional stress of such hearing, he decided to submit a letter of resignation from the organization itself.

A Scriptural Practice, Practiced Unscripturally

I have no desire to imply that the persons involved (as, for example, Witness elders referred to) are themselves without natural compassion and feeling. I am sure that with many that is not the case.[11] What follows is to demonstrate *the effects of a system*, to illustrate what sad, at times almost unbelievable, consequences can result when individuals let a religious system take over the exercise of their conscience, the hardening, unnatural effect this can exercise on human feelings. (And it must be said that this undeniably does create an atmosphere in which any who *might* incline to be domineering or unfeeling can prosper, while those who are of a compassionate nature find themselves faced with possible charges of lack of "loyalty to the organization" if they express that compassion.)

This information is likewise not to be taken as expressing any opposition to the withdrawal of fellowship from wrongdoers of itself. It is Biblically taught. It can serve the healthful purpose of protecting persons against corrupting influences and the corrosion of Christian belief and standards. The problem is that what is Biblically taught in many cases is not what is practiced.

The apostle Paul's words in his First Letter to the Corinthians, chapter five, for example, are used, or misused, in a legalistic way that is contrary to what he there said. On the basis of a case of *extreme immorality* within the Corinthian congregation (one that even the permissive standards of the Gentiles condemned), Paul warned of the danger this represented for the whole congregation and said:

> I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. . . . Expel the wicked man from your number.[12]

His words deal—not with persons claiming to be Christians who have *at some time* been guilty of an act or acts of immorality, greed, drunkenness or similar wrongdoing—but with persons claiming to be Christians who *are* immoral, who *are* greedy, who *are* drunk-

11 The feelings expressed by the elder whose letter was just quoted illustrate that compassion can be found among Witness elders.

12 1 Corinthians 5:9-11, 13, *NIV*.

ards, and so forth. A person's getting drunk on one occasion does not make him "a drunkard," and in the same way an act of immorality does not automatically make one "a fornicator" or "immoral person." The apostle's words clearly related to *a continuing course of life*, a *characteristic and distinguishing factor* in what the person actually *is*. Adherence to this apostolic instruction should present no complex problem for Christians. We should not find it difficult to decide whether an individual is one who, if invited into our homes, would represent a clear danger, a corrupting influence, to the morality and Christian faith of our family, our children.

In Watch Tower policy, however, this apostolic instruction has been applied in a way that converts it into the basis for a complicated, formalistic exercise of legal authority whereby those supposed to serve as spiritual shepherds often become little more than spiritual policemen, even detectives, prosecutors, court judges and imposers of sanctions, a system that seems in many respects to be patterned after the law enforcement and judicial systems of the world, with initial courts and appeal courts, and prescribed procedures, modes of sentencing and probationary arrangements. Elders even form an ecclesiastical court before whom divorce actions must first be cleared as acceptable if remarriage is contemplated. The organization's policies in effect establish a confessional arrangement with elders serving as "father confessors" to whom all serious sins *must* be confessed, and who can grant "absolution" if they so decide. And, as will be seen, they produce an "informer" system, with each member feeling duty bound to report any deviation from the organizational norm on the part of any member—unless that person goes himself to the "confessional" of the elder body. At the same time, this results in an attitude and climate in which individuals who fall into wrongdoing often fear to seek help, feeling concern that admission of the wrong will immediately start the wheels of the judicial machinery to work.[13]

A letter to the Governing Body from the Watch Tower's British branch quotes the organization's policy that all serious sins require reporting to the body of elders and are not to be handled by any single elder or kept confidential by him.[14] It then gives an actual case where a "sister of irreproachable character, of fine reputation in the congregation, the wife of an unbelieving man who

13 Contrast this with James 5:16, where the disciple does not limit confession as to be made to men in authority, but says, "Confess your sins to *one another*, and pray for *one another*, so that you may be healed."

14 Letter dated May 3, 1979, signed by W. Gooch, then the branch coordinator.

shows her little love," committed adultery on one occasion with a non-Witness man. The next day, greatly distressed, she went to an elder and confessed her wrong. The branch's letter relates:

> The elder, a compassionate man, knowing the sister well over some years, realised that she was not a hardened sinner, that she had already reproved herself, and simply needed encouragement and help to recover her spiritual equilibrium and good relationship with Jehovah. He prayed with her, counselled her, and arranged to give her continued help to make sure she would neither fall again into sin, nor be swallowed up with remorse.

The elder, however, felt an organizational obligation to report the matter to the presiding overseer. The result:

> Unfortunately, this brother [the presiding overseer] took offense at the elder's handling the matter in this way and made it known to the body of elders and it has become a bone of contention among them as to whether the elder was right or wrong. We might say, in this particular instance the sister has recovered herself and is doing well in Jehovah's service.

The real issue for these elders was *not* whether a straying sheep had been helped to recover. It was whether *organizational policy* had been adhered to. The fact is that it had not, and though the results of the elder's actions were obviously good, he was nonetheless "out of order" from the organizational standpoint. He felt that for the sister to be brought before a committee would seriously—and unnecessarily—damage her reputation. But organizational policy did not provide for letting such concerns determine his action. The British branch coordinator goes on to say:

> There is no doubt that many who have been in the same position as the sister have held back from confessing their sin to an elder out of knowledge that their subsequent meeting with the judicial committee would leak out and be public knowledge and ruin a previously impeccable reputation. This holding back on their part has been to their spiritual hurt. Is it not better if such fine people, who make a single mistake, might know that they can have the matter handled privately? Would it not encourage them to come forward and confess their wrong and receive the help they need?
>
> Some might say that this would encourage people in sin, believing they can have it handled quietly, as in the "confessional," and then sin again. But that argument cannot be sustained. If they have a bent to sin and repeat it, they know it will be handled by a judicial committee. . . .
>
> So, our question is really asking whether each elder can make his own decision whether to handle such matters, including immorality, privately himself, or to report it to the body of elders for investigation.

The British branch coordinator's reasoning was sound, compassionate, as well as revealing in regard to the actual damaging restraint caused by the organizational policy. But the Governing Body left the policy unchanged. A traditional view controlled.[15]

Since the organization's policies enter into virtually all fields of conduct, elders also feel authorized, at times even obligated, to involve themselves in any aspect of the lives of others in the congregation, with or without invitation. This produces a situation where the right of Witness parents to discipline and restore their children as they judge best is often subject to preemptive, even arbitrary, control and determination by elders. Parents do not feel free to make their own decision as to whether they wish to invite outside assistance or not. They are caused to feel duty-bound to report instances of wrongdoing within their families to elders. The elders decide whether they think the "parents have the situation in hand"; otherwise they act as a judicial court in the matter. [16] There often is a similar interposing of judicial authority within the marital relationship.[17]

Furthermore, the evidence indicates that with distressing frequency their intervention is not from an approach of offering help and healing, but in the capacity of appointed authorities, with almost unlimited warrant to investigate, interrogate and subpoena testimony.[18] All too often the aim of initial questioning (generally done by two elders) appears to be to determine whether the evidence provides basis for indictment, thereby obliging the wrongdoer to submit to a judicial hearing before a religious court ("judicial committee") of three elders, a hearing that is essentially secret, not open to any persons other than those admitted by the "judicial committee."

While this might be viewed as expressing compassionate concern for the privacy of the accused wrongdoer, his or her wishes are simply not a factor. Even if the accused *wishes* and *requests* that the matter be heard in an open way so that all may witness the evidence, this is not permitted by the policies of the organization.

15 The 1983 organization manual *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry*, page 145, says, "elders may be approached by individuals who either confess their own sins or report what they know regarding the wrongdoing of others. (Jas. 5:16; Lev. 5:1) But regardless of the exact manner in which the elders first hear reports of serious wrongdoing on the part of a baptized member of the congregation, an initial investigation will be made."

16 See the *Watchtower* of November 15, 1988, page 20.

17 See *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 47 to 54; the *Watchtower* of March 15, 1983, pages 30, 31.

18 In cases where a person is suspected of disagreement with the organization, he may be interrogated about the things he reads, the persons he speaks to, the letters he receives, virtually nothing being viewed as "off limits" for his interrogators. Failure to answer all questions creates jeopardy for the person.

As discussed, efforts at reform or "readjustment" to "save" the person generally do not go beyond the holding of one or two meetings with him or her. As a sort of universal remedy, elders usually prescribe increased "field service" and meeting attendance and if the person does not follow this prescription this is viewed as evidence of an unrepentant attitude. Rarely is any enduring, long-term program of *personal* help offered or supplied. If adjudged guilty and of not having demonstrated sufficient evidence of repentance, the judgment of the committee (whether for disfellowshiping, or, as a less drastic action, for the person's being publicly reproved) is announced to the congregation without the congregation's knowing the actual grounds for the decision.

If disfellowshiped, the individual now is viewed as in a "disfellowshiped *state*." It is no longer a question of what he is actually doing, or the *life he is living*, but what his *category* or *status* is. He can only exit from that status by following the prescribed procedure of the organization. The decision as to whether to declare his disfellowshiped "state" as ended or not rests entirely with a judicial committee of elders.

Thus, a young man of sixteen may be disfellowshiped for some act of sexual immorality. He may not choose to go through the necessary steps for "reinstatement" and the ending of his disfellowshiped "status." However, he may no longer engage in sexual immorality, may later marry, father children, show himself to be a faithful husband, a good father, and an honest, responsible person, seeking to live by Christian principles. Yet, no matter how many years may have passed or what kind of person he shows himself to be, *he is to be treated the same as if he were a sexually immoral person, a corrupting influence*, a person with whom other Christians, even his family members, should not associate. Why? Because he has not taken the legal steps ordained by the organization for having the "disfellowshiped state" lifted and being officially declared fit for association. If the father in the parable of the prodigal son had lived by such policies, then, upon seeing his wayward son approaching the home, rather than running out and embracing him as he did, he would instead have had to insist that the son first be screened by a committee of three to determine

whether the father could properly express such parental interest and affection.[19]

In this way, adult and mature Christians are denied any right to exercise their own intelligence and judgment as to whether a person is a clean-living person or not, whether they could properly invite him or her into their home or not. The religious authority must first rule on this, and if the authority does not lift the disfellowshiped "label" the person must remain as "taboo."

At the Brooklyn headquarters (as also at Branch offices in the various countries) files have been maintained recording all disfellowshiping actions. Not only the names of those disfellowshiped but also the correspondence containing some details of the action has generally been retained. It may have been retained for a considerable time, many years, even after an individual has been "reinstated." For some strange reason, even when a person listed dies, the practice at the Brooklyn headquarters was to retain the record of his or her having been disfellowshiped![20]

In 1973, a Witness wrote to the headquarters stating that, on a tour of the Brooklyn facilities, the tour guide had pointed out a file cabinet marked "Confidential" and explained that it contained the records of those disfellowshiped. This man had been disfellowshiped some sixteen years before and had been reinstated only seven months after the disfellowshipment. The briefness of the period was because of the minor nature of the problem. In his letter he stated that other elders later told him that they thought the disfellowshiping action was taken only because "the Society was stressing 'loyalty to the organization.'" Four months after being disfellowshiped, and before his reinstatement, he had been drafted

19 Luke 15:11-24. For many years it was viewed as improper to pray for disfellowshiped persons. The branch committee in Great Britain (letter dated May 3, 1979) referred to the parable of the prodigal son when inquiring of the Governing Body about this policy, citing the case of a "faithful sister whose son, disfellowshipped 14 years ago for fornication, is now married with two children and is no longer a fornicator," and expressing how difficult it was to tell the sister it was wrong to pray for her son, that is, pray for his "return to the organization." The policy changed (see the *Watchtower* of October 15, 1979, page 31; December 1, pages 30, 31) and the woman could now pray for her son—yet his "disfellowshiped status" and the label going with it remained. More recent *Watchtower*s have emphatically stressed avoidance by relatives of association with any such disfellowshiped ones—not because they are now wrongdoers but because they have not gone through the organization's procedure for reinstatement.

20 In the pre-computer times, orange-colored "Disfellowshiped" cards were used for the file on disfellowshiped persons. Jon Mitchell, who worked in the Service Department, as well as in secretarial work in the Executive Offices, relates that, after such cards were stamped with the word "Deceased," they were then put back in the file. He quotes a fellow-worker, Lee Waters, as observing, "We must be the only organizaton which keeps records like this for dead people."

for military service and had been willing to face imprisonment by refusing. In his letter, he wrote that he found it disturbing to think that, in addition to the inner suffering he had experienced as a result of the disfellowshiping, he was now confronted with the probability that his name was on a "confidential file." He said that, "having a 'mark' against one on permanent file like a police file at the precinct seems to me highly irregular." In his Word, God mercifully invites those sinning to reconcile with Him and assures them that, though their sins be as scarlet, "they will be made white just like snow," and says, "I shall forgive their error, and their sin I shall remember no more."[21] As seen, by contrast the Watch Tower organization carefully maintains voluminous files, files containing a vast amount of embarrassing information.[22]

A Course Unsupported by Biblical Precedent

There is nothing to show that the legalistic approach and circumstance so strongly present in the Witness organization was ever ordained among God's people, either in pre-Christian or in Christian times. In praising the provision in the U. S. constitution for an accused person to "enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial . . . to be informed of the nature and cause of the accusation; to be confronted with the witnesses against him," the *Awake!* magazine of January 22, 1981 (page 17), went on to demonstrate that justice in the nation of Israel employed these same principles, stating:

> Since the local court was situated at the city gates, there was no question about the trial being public! (Deut. 16:18-20) No doubt the public trials helped influence the judges toward carefulness and justice, qualities that sometimes vanish in secret star-chamber hearings. What about witnesses?
>
> Witnesses in Bible times were required to testify publicly. For this reason they were warned not to be influenced in their testimony by the pressure of public opinion "so as to turn aside *with the crowd* in order to pervert justice."

Although, when convenient, the Watch Tower organization frequently goes back to Mosaic law and law procedures for support

21 Isaiah 1:18; Jeremiah 31:34.

22 In his November 18, 1971, letter to President Knorr, headquarters Writing Department overseer Karl Adams questioned the keeping of these files even after the individual was reinstated. He commented: "At the present time the names of even those reinstated are kept in the file, and bulky records are kept of their cases, labeled 'Do not destroy.' It seems tantamount to saying: `We believe you are forgiven, but we are keeping a record of your sin.' Or, like saying, `Your sins are washed clean but we are storing the dirt in a jar with your name on the label.'" Decades later the practice still continued.

for its policies, it acts exactly contrary to the principles here presented. Though it praises the influence toward "carefulness and justice" that public hearings produce, the reality is that all Witness "judicial committee" hearings are, by organizational policy, held precisely in the form of "secret star-chamber hearings," with the result that the committee is, in effect, answerable only to itself. The validity of its announced decisions must be accepted purely on faith by the congregation. Unlike the congregation members in Corinth, who knew clearly what the reason and circumstances were that motivated Paul to urge them to cease association with the individual in question, congregation members today are left in the dark. Supposition, conjecture and gossip often fill the vacuum produced by the secrecy of the committee's actions. As someone has put it, "Trying to squash a rumor is like trying to unring a bell," and, once unleashed, the gossip spawned by these secret hearings can bring lasting, as well as unjust, damage to the individual's reputation.

In pre-Christian times, the scriptural evidence is that the elders of a city or town basically served in a judicial capacity when *requested* to do so by one who claimed to be aggrieved, thus primarily in the settling of *controversies*, with major and difficult cases going before the temple priesthood or, later, before the king, as Jehovah's representatives. (Compare Exodus 18:13-16; Deuteronomy 17:8, 9; 25:1; 2 Samuel 14:4-7; 15:2-6; 1 Kings 3:16-22; Isaiah 10:1, 2; Ruth 4:1-13.) There is little to show that the village elders *initiated* action unilaterally, as investigators and prosecutors, other than in the case of crimes of great seriousness, as, for example, in crimes involving bloodshed or the worship of false gods. (Deuteronomy 17:2-5; 21:1-9) The text at Deuteronomy 21:18-21 is often used to justify intervention by Witness elders in cases of wrongdoing by children. In reality it demonstrates that matters were essentially left to the parents to decide and handle, for the parents described in the text had clearly exhausted their own efforts at correction and reform. They only turned the matter over to the city elders when forced to the conclusion that their son (one who quite evidently had attained a fair age) was an extreme case, showing himself to be an incorrigible rebel, glutton or drunkard.

Christians, of course, are not subject to the law system of Israel, though its underlying *principles* serve as guidance to them. A reading of the Christian Scriptures clearly shows that the apostles and other writers emphasized—not intense, scrupulous law enforcement—but the building up of fellow believers in love and faith

through teaching, exhortation, reproof, encouragement, and above all by example, as the means for attaining moral and ethical cleanness among Christians. The ceasing of fellowship with persons pursuing a sinful course was not the result of some formalized judicial procedure and edict. It called for voluntary congregational response on a *personal* level, not action resulting from having a judicial edict *imposed* on the members as a collective body. While, when circumstances required, congregational members were urged to withdraw fellowship for the good of the congregation and its name and with the additional hope that the wrongdoer might be shamed into leaving his course, we may note the apostle's expression to Corinthian Christians that the "rebuke given *by the majority*" of the congregation was sufficient and that the man should now be forgiven *by them*—not reinstated by a committee. (2 Corinthians 2:6-8) By contrast, Watch Tower policy causes any members who fail to observe an official proscription of association with a disfellowshiped individual to be disfellowshiped themselves. Yet Paul says nothing about taking such an action toward the minority who chose not to share in the rebuke given to the particular wrongdoer referred to in his letter.

Shunning

At Matthew 18:15-19, Jesus gave instruction regarding the settling of faults between persons, saying:

> Moreover, if your brother commits a sin, go lay bare his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take along with you one or two more, in order that at the mouth of two or three witnesses every matter may be established. If he does not listen to them, speak to the congregation. If he does not listen to the congregation, let him be to you just as a man of the nations and as a tax collector.

The Watch Tower organization focuses on the last phrase, "let him be to you just as a man of the nations and as a tax collector," as support for a very extreme attitude toward any officially excommunicated.[23] The September 15, 1981, *Watchtower* draws heavily on historical material about traditional Pharisaic behaviour toward such persons in Jesus' day and then imposes this as a pattern for its modern policy.

23 In this as in several of the following sections I have been assisted by the research done by others as to the points at issue.

The Jews then had a shunning system involving stages of punishment, described by three terms:

> 1) *Nidduy*, for the first offense. This forbade sharing the bath, the razor, the convivial table, and it restricted social intercourse and the frequenting of the temple. It lasted 30, 60 or 90 days.
>
> 2) If the offender still remained obstinate, the curse (*herem*) was formally pronounced upon him by the council (ten men), and he was shut out from the intellectual, religious and social life of the community, completely severed from the congregation.
>
> 3) *Shammatha*, is probably a general term applied to both *nidduy* and *herem*. It evidently is what is pointed to in the references to persons being "put out of the synagogue," as at John 9:22; 12:42; 16:2.[24]

Jesus may have referred to these differing stages when saying of his followers that people would "separate you from their company, and reproach you [from the Greek, *oneidizo*, corresponding to the Hebrew *herem* ("malediction")], and cast out your name as evil."[25]

This Jewish procedure reminds one of the Watch Tower policies which, while not necessarily parallel, partake of the same formalistic approach, with its varying stages of:

> 1) *Marking*, applied to persons who, though not known to be guilty of grave sin, are viewed as displaying "flagrant disregard for theocratic order." Such a person is to be admonished first and, if he continues his course, then a talk is given to the congregation about his type of conduct and members are called on to "mark" any person practicing such conduct. He is not completely shunned but members are to 'limit social fellowship' with him.[26]
>
> 2) *Reproof*, linked with a probationary period. This involves sins viewed as more serious than those simply allowing for "marking." (Though such sins as fornication, drunkenness, and theft are always sufficient to merit official "reproof," in other areas the distinction often is not clear and depends largely on the view of the particular elders handling the matter.) The "reproof" may be "private reproof," or it may be "reproof before all onlookers" (the "onlookers" being those who gave testimony at the religious court hearing), or, if the matter is deemed of general knowledge,

24 *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, page 1050.
25 Luke 6:22.
26 See *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry*, pages 152, 153, and the *Watchtower* of April 15, 1985, pages 30, 31. I believe there is no question that the distinction between this and full shunning is quite nebulous for most Witnesses and the *Watchtower* discussion does little to remove the confusion. As discussed later, its explanation of the key text at 2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15, contains a serious error.

> "reproof" before the entire congregation. If he is to be officially "reproved" before the congregation, this must be done at a weekly "Service Meeting" and the announcement may be followed later by a talk discussing the type of sin involved. Restrictions may be applied, such as not sharing in conducting any parts in meetings, not representing the congregation in prayer, reading scriptures or even commenting at meetings.[27] The person is not officially labeled as to be shunned but invariably he or she experiences cool treatment and a reduction of social acceptance and is almost certain to be the subject of negative talk and conjecture—the actual facts of the case being known only to the elders. Length of the probation period is determined by the elders acting in their judicial capacity.
>
> 3) *Disfellowshipment*, which brings total rejection, a complete cutting off. Other members are not even to speak to disfellowshiped ones.

Viewed against the background of the Jewish practices in effect in Jesus' day, we see not simply a similar emphasis on prescribed procedure, but the expression of a similar legalistic *spirit*, which is most notable. The Scriptures, rather than advocating the existing Jewish system, show that its effects were terroristic, instilling strong fear of authority. Instead of improving peoples' character by discipline, it actually had a corrupting, debilitating effect on them. The apostle John, who wrote that "love throws fear outside," is most notable in revealing how this shunning system exerted a damaging effect on the consciences of the Jewish people, hindering their expression of faith and even leading as far as their denying the Messiah.—See John 7:13; 9:22; 12:42, 43; 19:38; 20:19; 1 John 4:18.

Typifying the intimidation felt, Nicodemus, *though believing Jesus to have "come from God*," nevertheless waited till the night to visit him, incognito. Jesus told him that "he that does what is true comes to the light," rather than seeking the protective cover of darkness to avoid detection of what he really believes at heart.[28] I have had similar communications today, with people even taking out special post office boxes in order to correspond, all the while using a pseudonym to protect their identity. One young man,

27 See *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry*, pages 145, 146; the *Watchtower*, September 1, 1981, pages 23-27. This can apply not only to baptized Witnesses but to others who, after examination by two elders, are announced to the congregation as accepted "unbaptized publishers" (previously called "approved associates"), qualified to report field service time. See the *Watchtower*, November 15, 1988, pages 16-19, where the organizational procedures involved in these cases are spelled out in great detail.

28 John 3:1, 2, 21.

who said his father is a prominent elder, phoned me and had only spoken a sentence or two when he asked, "You're not taping this conversation, are you?" I assured him I did not do that. He continued, "You don't have computer equipment to trace my number?" I laughed and said, "No, I don't, and if I did have I wouldn't use it." He said he was sure I realized what a risk he was taking in phoning me and that if his wife came in he would have to hang up immediately. Not long into the conversation he did bring it to a quick close. The next day he phoned again and said, "I guess I sounded a bit paranoid." I replied, "Yes, you did, but I understand why." He has communicated over a period of many months and I still do not know his name (nor have I made any effort to learn it). The fear is almost palpable and it has the same origin as the fear affecting Nicodemus and others of his day—fear of discovery and punitive action by religious authority.

In his words at Matthew 18:15-19, Jesus does not set forth a prescription for organizational excommunication. The wording indicates an offense and a penalty of purely personal nature.[29] Even after referring to the "congregation" (evidently meaning the operating Jewish congregation, for there was no Christian congregation as yet), Jesus said, "let him be to you [singular]" as a Gentile or tax collector.[30] Rather than an ecclesiastical action, imposed on an entire congregation, there is simply a principle given providing for the wronged one's dignified, *personal* avoidance of an obstinate offender. The context preceding and following these verses also points to this.

Whereas verses 17 and 18 of this section are portrayed as implying action by ecclesiastical authority, the verses following indicate otherwise. As few as two persons can arrive at a decision on religious matters and can have God's blessing in their doing so. (See verse 19.) That blessing is not dependent on the decision-reachers being individuals holding some official *position*, nor on their decision's being submitted to some centralized authority structure. The reason is that Jesus promises (verse 20) to be "in their midst," guiding their thoughts even as he does in all other cases of true Christian efforts and *this* is what produces agreement and genuine unity, irrespective of numbers. His Father is "over all

29 Some translations, following certain ancient manuscripts, read at verse 15, "If your brother sins against you." (See *NIV*; *NRSV*; *TEV*; *LB*; *NEB* [footnote].)

30 Whereas in English "you" can refer either to one person or several persons, Greek has separate forms to indicate singular or plural application.

and *through all*," not just in some, in cultivating "the unity of the spirit."[31] Christ prayed for their unity, knowing that even his mighty personal earthly influence would not of itself maintain this and that their peace could come only as a fruitage of God's Spirit.[32] It was not to be a peace imposed by authoritarian control.

At verse six of Matthew chapter 18, Jesus warned against 'putting a stumbling block before one of these little ones *who believes in me*.' *Belief in him* is the criterion, not acceptance of an organization's doctrinal, ecclesiastical package. Their *personal* relationship with the Father is stressed (verse 10), and the parable of the strayed sheep and the shepherd's deep concern for that one sheep is related (verses 12-14). The evidence is that by its dogmatism, its authoritarian demands and unremitting grip on their thinking, beliefs and conscience, the Witness organization does indeed stumble many persons. Worse, having done so, it then abandons them after what amount to only token efforts at remedying the problem. Yet they are among those "little ones" of whom Christ said, they "believe *in me*."

Just as one instance among many to illustrate how the *spirit* produced causes or, at the very least, *allows* elders to feel justified in taking harsh measures toward "little ones," there is the case of a young couple living in a midwestern state and engaged to be married. The young man lived by himself in an apartment; the young woman lived with her mother and stepfather. Both of their mothers had become Witnesses and they convinced the couple to study with Jehovah's Witnesses as this would get their future marriage off to a good start. They began studies with a couple serving as "pioneers" in the area, the husband studying with the young man, the wife with the young woman. The young persons showed real desire to gain knowledge of God's will, and after a few months began attending some of the Witness meetings. The wife of the "pioneer" couple studying with them then relates what happened:

> One Friday my husband received a call from the young man, saying he had a problem and asking would we please come over. When we arrived at his apartment, the young woman was also there. She explained that the night before her stepfather had thrown her out of the house. Having nowhere else to go at that late hour, she had gone to her fiancé's apartment and, concerned to do the "right thing," he gave her his bedroom and slept on the sofa. Their call was because they wanted to find a place immediately for her

31 Ephesians 4:3-6.
32 John 17:16-21; Galatians 5:22.

to stay. My husband and I volunteered to let her stay with us until she could either resolve things with her stepfather or find another place to stay. She was to come to our house that evening.

As we drove away, my husband told me that even though he felt fine about the arrangement he nevertheless wanted to "clear it" with the congregation elders first. I said I could not understand why we needed the elders' "okay" to have a house guest—particularly why my husband as head of the house needed this. He still was determined to talk with the elders before the young woman's arrival at our house, saying that he wanted the elders to know that he was "submissive to the organization."

That evening he met with two elders and after a long, private discussion was told that under no circumstances should we allow the young woman into our house. I was shocked and my husband seemed quite surprised as well. We arrived home after 9:30 P.M.. and learned that the young woman had been waiting for us for hours but had left. My husband phoned her and informed her that the elders did not want her to stay with us and that our offer thus had to be canceled. The young couple did not know what to do and decided she would have to spend yet another night at the apartment.

The next morning at 9 A.M.., two elders knocked at the apartment door, were invited in. The young couple said that at first they were delighted that someone was coming to help them. The elders, however, simply asked if it was true that the young woman had spent two nights in the apartment. The couple said it was true and tried to explain why. The elders replied that that was all they needed to know and told them that in view of what had happened they had no other choice than to formally "disassociate" the couple the next day at the Sunday meeting. There was presumption of guilt beyond what the elders had been told.

We arrived shortly after the elders left and found the couple depressed and disillusioned. I could not believe that such action was necessary in view of the circumstances, particularly with people who had just been studying three months and had only attended a few meetings. When my husband contacted the elders they informed him that they could properly "disassociate" anyone as long as the person had attended even "one meeting." Sunday, with the couples' mothers and two sisters present, the formal announcement of their "disassociation" was read and the audience told that they were not to be associated with. The young couple were now also split off from their families.

My husband made an appointment a few days later to speak with a circuit overseer. Seemingly very empathetic, the man however told us that, while he wished he had known before the announcement was made, now that it was made there was nothing

> that could be done about it, that the Society did not want to publicly override local elders.
>
> The young couple said they felt that whatever they now did they were condemned anyway. They began living together, after a few months married, had children, eventually got divorced. I cannot help but wonder if, had they not been subjected to public embarrassment and alienated from their respective families at that early point in their young lives, whether life's road would have been smoother for them. Regardless of whether their lives would have been different or not, the manner in which they were dealt with certainly displayed little of love, mercy or compassion.

This action took place previous to the November 15, 1988, *Watchtower* and its ruling that unbaptized persons engaging in wrongdoing are not to be officially pronounced, or treated as, disfellowshiped persons. Perhaps under the new ruling the elders might have acted differently. This, however, simply underscores the wrongness of the imposition of organizationally-formulated rules, rules that override individual conscience, that restrict men from expressing the compassion and mercy, as well as sensible judgment, they might otherwise normally express. The damage done by such rules is, in many cases, irreversible. It may be noted as well that the *Watchtower* referred to states that if investigating elders decide the unbaptized committer of some wrong no longer qualifies as a "publisher," then "a simple announcement [will be made] at an appropriate time saying,' . . . is no longer a publisher of the good news.'" This is not a formal disfellowshiping announcement. Yet the results would, in all probability, be much the same. While saying that, even in this case, Witnesses are 'not required to avoid speaking' with such a one, the *Watchtower* adds the caveat that, despite this "adjustment," "the counsel at 1 Corinthians 15:33 should still be observed."[33] Reference to this text, regarding "bad associations [that] spoil useful habits," would almost certainly cause the majority of Witnesses to feel constrained to grant anything beyond cool acknowledgement to such an unbaptized person. Virtually none would feel that the "readjusted" organizational policy would allow them to visit with or spend time in seeking to build up the individual spiritually. If they were to do so, they would undoubtedly be spoken to reprovingly by the elders. Such "adjustments" in policy, spelled out in legal-

33 The *Watchtower*, November 15, 1988, page 19, and footnote.

istic terms and technical distinctions, rarely produce a change in the spirit developed by the organization, and it is that spirit and mindset that lie at the base of so much of the unkindness and lack of compassion manifest.

Whose Example?

Jesus' words as to an individual's viewing a recalcitrant offender as a "man of the nations and as a tax collector," supply no justification for the attitude of cold disdain and extreme aversion the Watch Tower organization inspires toward those it disfellowships. The Scriptures give us two examples between which to choose. The *Watchtower* (both in the September 15, 1981 issue earlier referred to, and in a more recent April 15, 1991 issue) stresses the example of Jewish religious leaders of Christ's day, who viewed Gentiles and tax collectors with deep prejudice and scorn. The articles speak of such ones as being "despised" and even "hated."

In great contrast the Hebrew Scriptures had for centuries urged a very different attitude. Israelites were to love the alien, for they had once been aliens themselves.[34] Gentiles had the right of asylum, occasionally even had Israelite servants, could offer prayer at the Temple, and the Israelites are shown as having prayed on behalf of Gentile rulers.[35]

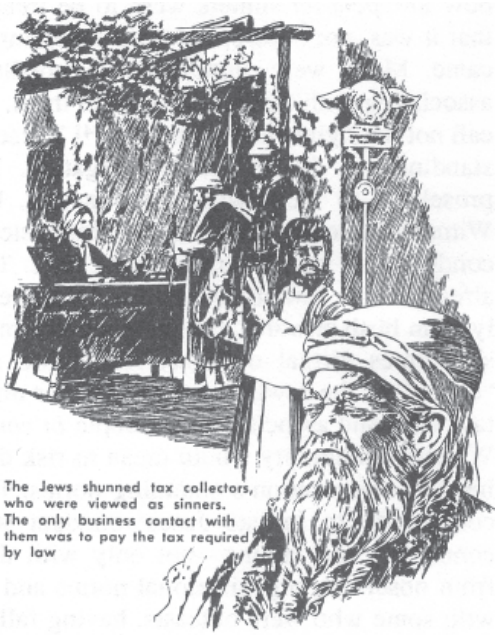
The attitude of the Jews underwent a corrupting change over the centuries, the reason doubtless being the terrible treatment they suffered at the hand of Gentile captors during the exile. They apparently took Scriptures relating to Israel's entrance into Canaan and commands for avoiding idolatrous contamination as basis for categorizing all Gentiles as, by nature, enemies of God and of his people.[36] By New Testament times Gentiles were viewed with extreme aversion, even near hatred, and counted as unclean, it now being deemed "unlawful" to have friendly intercourse with them. Even when they became proselytes they were not admitted, as in old times, to full fellowship. These prevailing prejudices are reflected in the accounts found at John 18:28; Acts 10:28; 11:3; Galatians 2:12.

34 See Deuteronomy 10:19; 24:14, 15; Exodus 23:9. The Kenites were considered almost brothers of the Israelites, and Rechabites, Jebusites, Hittites and others of foreign races were accepted with favor. (Judges 1:16; 5:24; 2 Samuel 11:6-11; 15:19-22; 18:2; 24:15-25; Jeremiah 35:1-19.)

35 Numbers 35:15; Leviticus 25:47; 1 Kings 8:41-43; Jeremiah 29:1, 7; compare Ezra 6:10.

36 See for example Leviticus 18:24-30; Deuteronomy 7:3-12; Ezra 9:11. 12.

God's Son was not bound by these and similar social norms, and was criticized by the religious authorities for the very reason that he did not conform to them.[37] He knew his Father's will and His love for all mankind, of whatever race, and Jesus set a higher standard for us to follow.[38] He showed this in his behavior toward both Gentiles and tax collectors (viewed as despised agents of the Gentile government), toward Samaritans and sinners.[39] The Watch Tower organization would set this example aside in its shunning positions, claiming that Jesus associated with such ones only due to their previous evidence of receptiveness to the good news, saying that this "was not a pattern of how *unrepentant* sinners were to be treated."[40] They ignore the fact that it was, not before, but *after* receiving Jesus' help that repentance came. Many were sinners, even prostitutes, at the time of Jesus' associating with them, talking with them. As he said, "I have come to call not the righteous but sinners."[41] These were not "members in good standing" in the Jewish congregation. Nor were they prospective proselytes to the Jewish congregation, like those whom Jehovah's Witnesses would term "newly interested ones" and whose faulty conduct they may overlook for a time. They were for the most part



The *Watchtower's* view of disfellowshiped persons is modeled on the strongly biased view held by Jewish religious leaders toward tax collectors and Gentiles, rather than that of Jesus Christ.

37 Matthew 9:10, 11; 11:19.
38 John 3:16; Acts 10:28, 34.
39 Matthew 5:43-48; 8:8-13 (compare Luke 7:2-9); Matthew 9:10-13; 11:19; 15:21-28 (compare Mark 7:24-30); Luke 5:29, 30; 15:1, 2; John 4:7-42.
40 The *Watchtower*, September 15, 1981, page 19; April 15, 1991, pages 20, 21.
41 Matthew 9:11-13, *NRSV*.

already *in* the Jewish community, the covenant people of God (probably from birth onward), but their conduct made them "marked" persons, sometimes virtual outcasts. And those so marking them were the "elders" of the Jewish community. For one of Jehovah's Witnesses to talk with and associate with people *in comparable relationship* to the Witness community would mean to risk disfellowshipment for violating the organization's shunning norms. For someone in the Witness community to imitate Jesus' conduct would mean to spend time contacting and talking—not only with those who had moved away from observing organizational norms and from association—but even with some who were outcasts, having fallen into sinful practices, and to seek to be a positive, healing force for them. The organization's policies rule against such a course. Once the "disfellowshiped" label is applied to a person, even his family members are to cut off any spiritual discussion with him.[42]

For many decades, even elders were not to speak to disfellowshiped persons—unless the individual approached them petitioning for a lifting of his or her disfellowshiped status.[43]

Elders were made to understand that they should never initiate any dialogue, that this must always be on the part of the disfellowshiped one. All of this despite the abundant evidence in Scripture that, by means of his appointed prophets, God himself had regularly initiated communication with those in Israel who had taken up an extremely sinful, even stubbornly rebellious course, appealing to them to turn from wrong ways they had engaged in, not momentarily, but for years.[44] The majority of the Hebrew prophecies were addressed to a nation deep in a sinful state. Add to this the fact that God "recommends his own love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us . . . when we were enemies."[45]

42 The only exception to this is in the case of a disfellowshiped minor child living in the home, the organization granting to the parents the right to continue giving spiritual instruction to the child. (The *Watchtower*, November 15, 1988, pages 19, 20) Older disfellowshiped relatives living in the home are allowed to be "present when spiritual material is considered as a family." (The *Watchtower*, April 15, 1991, page 22, footnote.) This presumably would include even a wife or a grandparent living in the home, the implication being that they are allowed to be present but not to share in the discussion.

43 In a 1971 letter to President Knorr, Karl Adams reminded him of his relating an incident involving Pryce Hughes, who at one time was the branch overseer for the British Isles. Karl wrote, "You related his happening to meet a disfellowshiped person and that he told you he had spoken very straightforwardly to the man, telling him what he ought to do to be restored. As I recall, he said that he did it because it `seemed the right thing to do,' although he described the event in an apologetic manner because of knowing he had not followed the Society's policy."

44 Compare Isaiah 1:2-6, 14-20; 44:21, 22; Jeremiah 3:12-14; 5:20-25; Ezekiel 18:30-32.

45 Romans 5:8-10.

After about half a century, the *Watchtower* of April 15, 1991, finally acknowledged this, and the propriety of initiating communication with disfellowshiped persons. Regrettably, it immediately proceeded to systematize the matter, limiting to the elders any such initiation of contact, spelling out in detail the rules by which any 'imitating of God's mercy' must be expressed.

The magazine's first article presents many fine examples and Scriptural principles demonstrating mercy. The second article proceeds to tell members just how they should *apply* these examples and principles, admittedly the crucial factor. One can almost visualize the influence of organizational authority on the article's writer in the transition that is made from Scripture to organizational policy. The second article quickly begins laying a foundation for limiting this merciful initiation of contact just to organizationally-appointed elders. Preceding a quotation of Matthew 18:15-17, it says that these words were stated to Jesus' apostles "who would later be Christian overseers," this despite the fact that the matter of overseership does not even enter into the counsel Jesus there gave and his counsel is clearly intended for all Christians. After several paragraphs focusing on elders, the April 15, 1991 *Watchtower* (page 22) then says:

> [10] The encyclopedia quoted earlier said: 'The basic rationale for excommunication was to protect the standards of the group: "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6). This motive is clear in most biblical and extracanonical passages, but *concern for the individual, even after expulsion, was the basis of Paul's plea in 2 Cor. 2:7-10.'* (Italics ours.) Hence, concern of this kind should logically be shown today by the shepherds of the flock. (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2) Former friends and relatives might hope that a disfellowshipped one would return; yet out of respect for the command at 1 Corinthians 5:11, they do not associate with an expelled person.* They leave it to the appointed shepherds to take the initiative to see if such a one is interested in returning.

Nowhere do the Scriptures themselves place elders in a privileged relationship, restricting to them exclusively such things as encouraging, reproving, or seeking to restore persons who have

taken a wrong course. That they may *take the lead* in so doing does not in any way mean that others are prohibited from doing the same things. To make such rulings reveals a clergy-laity mentality, not that of a Christian brotherhood; it sets two standards of conduct, one for elders, a different one for all others. The exhortation to be "imitators of God, as beloved children," is directed to *all* Christians, not just a select number thereof.[46] Of all things, surely the example God has set us of compassion and mercy is to be followed freely by all Christians, without their being hemmed in with organizational restrictions designed to promote ecclesiastical authority.[47] The material goes yet farther and systematizes even the elders' expression of mercy toward disfellowshiped and disassociated ones. It provides that "once a year *at most*, the body of elders should consider whether there are such persons [deemed worthy of an initiation of contact] living in their territory. The elders would focus on those who have been expelled for over a year."[48] It is typical of the Watch Tower organization that such a mechanistic approach is applied to an expression that by its very nature should be spontaneous and freely made, namely, the expression of mercy. Can anyone imagine a shepherd operating under such rules, once a year considering whether he should seek out a lost sheep, and limiting the search only to sheep who had been out of the flock for a year? How utterly unlike their heavenly Father's remarkable expression of mercy and longsuffering. To wrongdoers and even idolaters in Judah, He said:

> I myself have spoken to you persistently [untiringly and insistently, *NAB*], and you have not obeyed me. I have sent to you all my servants the prophets, sending them persistently, saying, "Turn now everyone of you from your evil way, and amend your doings, and do not go after other gods to serve them, and then you shall live in the land that I gave to you and your ancestors."[49]

The article then proceeds to spell out how elders' visits to such ones should be carried out, the procedural steps to be followed, and "what those of us who are not overseers and will not be taking such initiative toward disfellowshiped persons" should do. It goes into considerable detail as to how Witnesses should view and relate to families where one member living in the home is disfellowshiped,

46 Ephesians 5:1.
47 Compare Galatians 5:22, 23.
48 The *Watchtower*, April 15, 1991, page 23. A footnote reminds those not of the elder class that if they should learn of a disfellowshiped person living in the territory they should "give that information to the elders."
49 Jeremiah 35:14, 15, *NRSV*; compare Jeremiah 7:24, 25.

that they should not be like ancient Jews whose "hatred was extended even to the family of the tax collector," how to react if that person "does not have the courtesy to keep away from visitors," what to say if that one answers when the Witness visits the home or telephones.[50] All the fine counsel from Scripture the articles began with is thus promptly overprinted with organization policy that systematizes, codifies and, in effect, desiccates and vitiates the generous principles and examples of mercy given by God.

Not Even a "Hello" to Them

Aside from whatever once-a-year contact elders may make with certain disfellowshiped or disassociated persons, the treatment of such ones otherwise remains the same. All Witnesses not of the elder class are to avoid any association or communication with those in the disfellowshiped "state." While certain concession is made for a disfellowshiped family member residing within the family home, any relatives living outside are to be communicated with only when there is a family matter requiring this or some urgent need. The extreme rigidity of the policies is modeled on the harsh position taken by the religious leaders of Jesus' day. The *Watchtower* of September 15, 1981, page 21, quoted as corroboration of its policy this account of the treatment accorded those put out of the synagogues:

> Henceforth he was like one dead. He was not allowed to study with others, no [social] intercourse was to be held with him, he was not even to be shown the road. He might, indeed, buy the necessaries of life, but it was forbidden to eat or drink with such an one.[51]

Note that this was not, as in the case of Paul's exhortation to Corinthian Christians, a matter of personal decision, but synagogue members were "forbidden" by religious authority to act otherwise toward those expelled from the synagogue. This Jewish practice finds precise parallel in the treatment accorded any person on whom the Watch Tower organization, by its appointed elders, places the "disfellowshiped" label. He or she is viewed as "one dead." The particular *reason* for the action is completely immaterial. It might have been for killing roaches on an army base, doing lawn work for a church, or simply having a birthday celebration. Or it might have been for acknowledging inability to accept

50 The *Watchtower*, April 15, 1991, pages 23, 24.
51 Quoted by the *Watchtower* from *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, by A. Edersheim, Vol. II, page 184.

1914 as a date marked by the Bible, or that only certain persons should partake at the memorial celebration of Christ's death. In my own case it was for eating a meal in a restaurant with my employer, who had formally withdrawn from the organization.[52] The *label*, not the reason, determines the treatment.

The September 15, 1981, *Watchtower* (which, incidentally provided the means for taking disfellowshiping action toward me), asks the question:

> Would upholding God's righteousness and his disfellowshiping arrangement mean that a Christian should not speak at all with an expelled person, not even saying "Hello"?

The article then refers to the text at 2 John verses 9 to 11, which reads:

> Everyone that pushes ahead and does not remain in the teaching of the Christ does not have God. He that does remain in this teaching is the one that has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, never receive him into your houses or say a greeting to him. For he that says a greeting to him is a sharer in his wicked works.

John's words are taken as ruling out any communication with organizationally-expelled ones, not even allowing a simple "Hello." Those words, however, in no way support the claim.

First it should be noted that what is at issue is "the teaching of the Christ," not the teaching of some religious movement. John's first letter shows that for him such teaching was centered on the fundamental Christian confession that Jesus was the Christ, whom God had sent on earth in the flesh.[53] The rest of the Scriptures clearly show that the criterion for baptism was sincere belief that Jesus the Nazarene was indeed the Christ, that he gave his life for mankind and had been resurrected, and putting in practice *his* teaching and morals.[54] It was not belief in a complex set of "unique teachings" developed centuries later by some religious movement such as the Watch Tower organization, nor of observance of an equally complex set of organizationally-determined policies. Differences of view on other teachings of lesser significance would not be reason for divisions and separations, some cutting off others, shutting them out from fellowship. Thus the apostle urges:

52 See *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 305-327.
53 1 John 2:22, 23, 29; 3:23; 4:2, 3; 5:1-5.
54 Romans 10:6-9; 1 Corinthians 12:3; compare 1 Corinthians 1:2 and Matthew 16:16, 17.

> Accept among you the man who is weak in the faith, but do not argue with him about his personal opinions [on disputable matters, *NIV*].[55]

The *Watchtower* endeavors to gloss over this by relegating the disputable matters to "inconsequential matters of opinion, taste or variations of conscience."[56] This simply ignores the context which shows that the apostle specified such issues as the eating of certain foods and the observance of certain days as holy. (Romans 14:2-23) These were in no way "inconsequential" issues, particularly for Jewish believers. Belief in "eating anything" (verse 2) would include eating of meats offered to idols, or the flesh of pigs, and these were matters of the greatest seriousness for Christians of Jewish origin. This is seen in that some were actually judging the standing of others with God on this basis, something very unlikely if, as the *Watchtower* would imply, this had to do with mere matters of "taste" such as the incidental preferences of diet found in modern society and which have nothing to do with religious scruples.[57] The observance of certain days (verses 5, 6), such as the Sabbath, was a very crucial point in Jewish worship, and violation of the sabbath rest was counted among the greatest of sins. Jewish converts to Christianity would not easily adjust to viewing "one day as all others." Yet, despite differences of viewpoint on such serious issues, the exhortation was not to use them in judging the standing of others, and not to let them be sources of separation. Watch Tower policies fail to follow the apostolic counsel. They actually presume to do the *opposite* of what is said by making "decisions on inward questionings (*NW*)," "passing judgment on disputable matters (*NIV*)" and using such debatable matters in condemning those who are not theirs to condemn, since the persons are each "someone else's servant [and] whether he stands or falls it is his own master's business."[58]

55 Romans 14:1, *TEV*.

56 The *Watchtower*, September 1, 1981, page 20.

57 Compare Leviticus 11:7, 8; Isaiah 66:17; 1 Corinthians 8:7-13. The *Watchtower* of December 1, 1977, contained a discussion of Romans chapter 14 (written by Edward Dunlap) which accurately presented the seriousness of the issues involved. Subsequent articles have simply ignored the evidence there presented.

58 Romans 14:1, 4, JB. The *Living Bible* here reads: "They are God's servants, not yours. They are responsible to him, not to you."

None of these differences of viewpoint or understanding, then, are involved in the apostle John's description of one who does "not remain in the teaching of the Christ." Nor does the *Watchtower*'s discussion of the rest of John's exhortation conform to the facts. Note this discussion of the word "greeting" found in this text as presented in the July 15, 1985 *Watchtower*, page 31:

> John added: "For he that says a greeting to him is a sharer in his wicked works." (2 John 11) Here John used the Greek word of greeting *khai'ro* rather than the word *a·spa'zo·mai,* found in verse 13.
>
> *Khai'ro* meant to rejoice. (Luke 10:20; Philippians 3:1; 4:4) It was also used as a greeting, spoken or written. (Matthew 28:9; Acts 15:23; 23:26) *A·spa'zo·mai* meant *"to enfold* in the arms, thus *to greet, to welcome."* (Luke 11: 43; Acts 20:1, 37; 21:7, 19) Either could be a salutation, but *a·spa'zo·mai* may have implied more than a polite "hello" or "good-day." Jesus told the 70 disciples not to *a·spa'se·sthe* anyone. He thus showed that their urgent work allowed no time for the Eastern way of greeting with kisses, embraces, and long conversation. (Luke 10:4) Peter and Paul urged: 'Greet [*a·spa'sa·sthe*] one another with a kiss of love, or a holy kiss.'—1 Peter 5:14; 2 Corinthians 13:12, 13; 1 Thessalonians 5:26.
>
> So John may deliberately have used *khai'ro* in 2 John 10, 11 rather than *a·spa'zo·mai* (verse 13). If so, John was not urging Christians then to avoid merely *warmly greeting* (with an embrace, kiss, and conversation) a person who taught falsehood or who renounced the congregation (apostatized). Rather, John was saying that they ought not even greet such an individual with *khai'ro,* a common "good-day."*

Whoever wrote this material (repeated in the April 15, 1988, *Watchtower*), evidently overlooked or ignored the account in Luke 1:28, 29. The *Watchtower* seeks to attribute to the term *aspazomai* a *special warmth* of greeting distinctively surpassing that of the word used in John's second letter, *khairo*. That would enable it to say that *khairo*, being so much less "warm" than *aspazomai*, would relate to more commonplace, perfunctory greetings, including a simple "hello." On this basis they could rule out any verbal communication whatsoever with those they disfellowship. In Luke's account, however, we read the following of God's angel's visit to Mary:

> And he came to her and said, "Greetings [Greek, *khaire*], favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting [Greek, *aspasmos*] this might be.[59]

The two words are here obviously used interchangeably. Mary applies the term *aspasmos* to the word *khaire* pronounced by the

59 Luke 1:28, 29, *NRSV*.

angel. She did not do this because the angel had, in the *Watchtower* definition, "enfolded" her in his arms or kissed her, nor had he at this point engaged in a "long conversation" with her. She refers, not to an embrace or kiss, but to his "words."[60]

Not only does it commit this error, but the *Watchtower* also fails to recognize that the Greek verb *khairein* used by John does not relate to some simple greeting such as "Hello." It is not the least bit less "warm" than the other Greek term discussed. To the contrary, the term *khairein* literally means "to be rejoicing" and corresponds to the Hebrew term *shalom*, meaning "peace be with you."[61] It was used to express, not a mere commonplace greeting, but to express personal or social *favor* and *acceptance*, even to express recognition of authority.[62] Recognizing this, some translations, rather than rendering it as simply "greeting," render it as to "welcome."[63] Capturing well the sense of John's words, one translation reads:

> Do not welcome him into your home; do not even say, "Peace be with you" [Don't encourage him in any way, *Living Bible*]. For anyone who wishes him peace becomes his partner in the evil things he does.[64]

Clearly then, what a Christian denies to an antichrist is not some simple salutation such as "Hello" or "How do you do," but denies him the address which implies acceptance and agreement with his person or cause, wishing him favor and success. To "welcome" him in this manner would indeed make one "a sharer in his wicked works." To the contrary simply talking to a person does not of itself imply acceptance, agreement or favor. It is what one says that determines this. Certainly one does not become his partner in the evil things he does if one endeavors to refute him or talk him out of his wrong views, convincing him of the error of his ways. Quite the opposite, the Scriptures show this can be a Christian duty.[65]

In its latest policy "adjustment" allowing elders to initiate contact with disfellowshiped or disassociated persons, the *Watchtower* specifies that "No visit would be made on any who evidence a critical, dangerous attitude."[66] By its policy forbidding any speech with those it arbitrarily

60 At verse 40 a form of *aspazomai* is again used in referring to Mary's "greeting" Elizabeth, but, once again, it is simply verbal, for verse 41 speaks of Elizabeth as "hearing" the greeting, not receiving some warm embrace or kiss.

61 See the interlinear reading of 2 John 10, 11, in *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures*.

62 The official Roman acclamation, "Hail Caesar," is thus rendered in Greek as *khaire kaisar*, and the soldiers mockingly used the term in addressing Jesus as the "king of the Jews" at Matthew 27:29.

63 See 2 John 10 in the *New International Version*, the *New English Bible*, the *New Revised Standard Version*.

64 2 John 10, 11, *TEV*.

65 Compare James 5:19, 20; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Titus 1:10-13.

66 The *Watchtower*, April 15, 1991, page 23.

designates as "apostates," the Watch Tower organization not only maintains a sterile atmosphere within the membership, assuring that they will not be confronted with any convincing evidence of error on the organization's part, but the organization also escapes from having to respond to such evidence itself. It can simply shrug this off as "from an apostate source." Persons who have read *Crisis of Conscience* and who have written or phoned the Brooklyn headquarters have routinely had their questions ignored on this basis. Phone inquiries bring the response, "No comment." This "stonewalling" is justified by the claim that it would be wrong to discuss anything "from an apostate source."

Even if the charge of apostasy were true, which in most cases it is not, this is still an artificial excuse, a pretext that similarly has no Scriptural support. The first chapter of the book of Job depicts Jehovah as speaking with and engaging in a controversial discussion with Satan, the first and greatest of apostates. The Watch Tower publications discussing this say that Jehovah accepted the challenge made by Satan and that this acceptance ultimately produced beneficial results, though for a time bringing much suffering to Job.[67] Yet they themselves refuse to meet any challenge resulting from evidence that confronts their claims and which would call for no more than simple, open discussion, not intense suffering. Jehovah sent his prophets persistently to those He himself described as an "apostate nation," "renegade sons."[68] He did not condone their wrongdoing, minimize their sins, but He was willing to "set matters straight" with them, "contend" with them, even "enter into controversy" with them, to make plain their wrong and accomplish their redemption.[69]

God's Son did not hesitate to answer Satan, the great apostate, even quoting Scripture in refuting his temptations.[70] He described the religious leaders of Jehovah's covenant people in his day as sons of Gehenna, a brood of vipers, murderers, offspring of the Devil, yet he continually addressed them, responded to their questions and exposed their claims and arguments.[71] His apostles followed his example, not only with this class of men but with persons who professed Christianity and who advanced false teachings or sought to lead other Christians astray. One has but to read the apostolic letters to see that they do not seek to evade answering arguments from such sources but frankly confront them and refute them.

67 See *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, pages 105 to 111, also the *Watchtower*, November 1, 1986, page 31.
68 Isaiah 10:6; Jeremiah 3:12-14.
69 Isaiah 1:18; Jeremiah 2:9, 35; compare Isaiah 50:7, 8.
70 Matthew 4:1-11.
71 Matthew 23:15, 33; John 8:44.

One of the most potentially disturbing questions one can ask a religious leader is, "By what authority do you do these things?"[72] Rather than deal frankly with sober evidence presented by sincere persons questioning its claimed authority, the Watch Tower organization disfellowships those who do express themselves in this way. When Paul's apostleship was challenged he did not shrink from the challenge but provided his challengers with extensive evidence confirming his apostleship, dealing with specific issues or complaints and accusations from opposers.[73] And, as he himself says, he did not do this by an authoritarian stance or by 'terrorizing' them either through letter or by deed.[74] He did not presumptuously "dare . . . to recommend himself," nor did he use "fleshly weapons" of harassment, deceit or sophistry, as his challengers did; he did not use the weapon of threatening excommunication toward those questioning his position.[75]

In his counsel to Timothy, Paul urged him to stay clean from wrong influence and to avoid contentious debating. At the same time he did not instruct Timothy to combat such things with a show of authority or by threatening organizational reprisals, but instead urged him to strive to instruct with mildness those who were guilty of this and who needed to repent and to come free "from the snare of the Devil."[76]

Genuine Christians today should follow the example of God, his Son and his Son's apostles, not that of an authoritarian organization.

More Erroneous Distinctions

Since the Watch Tower organization especially rules out any conversation of a spiritual nature with disfellowshiped persons, it faces a problem when dealing with Paul's exhortation at 2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15. In the *New World Translation* his words read:

> But if anyone is not obedient to our word through this letter, keep this one marked, stop associating with him, that he may become ashamed. And yet do not be considering him as an enemy, but continue admonishing him as a brother.

Since following this counsel would not support or suit their policy of complete shunning, the Watch Tower classes this as treating of a less serious case than involved in disfellowshipment and

72 Matthew 21:23.
73 Compare 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3: 4-10; 4:1-16; 9:1-18; 15:9-11; 2 Corinthians 6:3-13; 7:2, 3, 8-13; 10:7-13; 11:5-27; 12:11-13, 16-19.
74 Compare 2 Corinthians 1:24; 10:1, 8, 9.
75 2 Corinthians 3:1; 10:3, 4, 12, 18; 12:16; compare 2 Peter 1:16.
76 2 Timothy 2:14-26.

they thus set up a separate category called "marking," which allows for less drastic measures and attitude toward those "marked." They would thereby make it appear that the treatment here discussed is different from that at 1 Corinthians 5:9-11. But is it?

The context shows that the offense is disobedience to the written word of an apostle sent by Christ. Certainly this is no minor matter. The Watch Tower organization surely would not view it in that light if it were a matter of Witnesses disregarding its own declaration of policies or teaching.

In its discussion of the text, the *Watchtower* of April 15, 1985, page 31, quotes Paul's words, "Stop associating with him," and then says:

> Brothers would not completely shun him, for Paul advised them to "continue admonishing him as a brother." Yet by their limiting [note, not terminating] social fellowship with him, they might lead him to become ashamed . . . .

What the *Watchtower* fails to recognize—or to acknowledge—is that the Greek phrase Paul used (*synanamignysthai*) for "stop associating with" is the *identical* phrase he used at 1 Corinthians 5:11 where the *New World Translation* renders it "quit mixing in company with." This can be seen in the interlinear reading of the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*:

There is no difference in the force of the term in both texts. In both cases, Christians are urged to avoid intimate fellowship on a personal level with persons committing the wrongs described ei-

1 Corinthians 5:11:

τοῦ κόσμου ἐξελθεῖν. **11** νῦν δὲ ἔγραψα the world to come out. Now but I wrote ὑμῖν μὴ συναναμίγνυσθαι ἐάν to you not to be mixing selves up with if ever τις ἀδελφὸς ὀνομαζόμενος ἢ πόρνος anyone brother being named may be fornicator ἢ πλεονέκτης ἢ εἰδωλολάτρης ἢ λοίδορος or covetous (one) or idolater or reviler ἢ μέθυσος ἢ ἅρπαξ, τῷ τοιούτῳ μηδὲ or drunkard or snatcher, to the such (one) not-but συνεσθίειν. **12** τί γάρ μοι τοὺς to be eating with. What for to me the (ones)	the world. 11 But now I am writing you to quit mixing in company with anyone called a brother that is a fornicator or a greedy person or an idolater or a reviler or a drunkard or an extortioner, not even eating with such a man. 12 For

2 Thessalonians 3:14:

ἐνκακήσητε καλοποιοῦντες. **14** εἰ you should behave badly in doing fine. If δέ τις οὐχ ὑπακούει τῷ λόγῳ ἡμῶν but anyone not is obeying to the word of us διὰ τῆς ἐπιστολῆς, τοῦτον through the letter, this (one) σημειοῦσθε, μη συναναμίγνυσθαι be you putting sign on, not to mix up selves with αὐτῷ, ἵνα ἐντραπῇ· **15** καὶ him, in order that he might be turned in; and μὴ ὡς ἐχθρὸν ἡγεῖσθε, ἀλλὰ not as enemy be you considering, but νουθετεῖτε ὡς ἀδελφόν. be you putting mind in as brother.	13 For YOUR part, brothers, do not give up in doing right. 14 But if anyone is not obedient to our word through this letter, keep this one marked, stop associating with him, that he may become ashamed. 15 And yet do not be considering him as an enemy, but continue

ther in First Corinthians chapter 5 or in Second Thessalonians chapter 3, doing this so that the wrongdoer may become ashamed. That is the extent of the counsel, nothing more.[77]

In the Christian association, there was ample room for personal differences. The teachings concerning Christ's Messiahship, his sacrificial death, resurrection and glorification, the benefits therefrom of salvation by faith, the operations of the holy Spirit and Christ's teachings and morality were strongly defended and viewed as essential for membership in his Body.[78] But even in such matters as disbelief in the resurrection, the wrong view was treated as a weakening in the brothers' spirituality and measures were taken to help by providing the necessary proof, rather than engaging in summary accusations of apostasy or by punitive actions by an ecclesiastical judiciary.[79]

It may be of interest to know that several of the points that have here been discussed were brought to the Governing Body's attention as much as twenty years ago. In the development of a new organizational manual, prepared by Karl Adams, Edward Dunlap and myself, I had prepared the section dealing with disfellowshiping and related issues. As mentioned in Chapter 6, Karl Adams, then the overseer of the Writing Department, submitted a memorandum to President Knorr explaining why certain adjustments were being recommended.[80] Karl himself clearly recognized the validity of many of the points that have here been discussed, as seen from these sections of pages 17 and 18 of his memorandum:

> We have viewed Matthew 18:17 as meaning disfellowshiping. Jesus said that when the man involved refused to "listen to the congregation," we should let him be "just as a man of the nations and as a tax collector." Exactly what does this mean as to the action we should take toward such disfellowshiped person? The Jews did not refuse to have any dealings at all with such persons, or refuse to speak to them.
>
> In connection with Matthew 18:17, it would be helpful to consider 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14, 15, and, along with this, 2 Timothy 2:25, 26 and James 5:19, 20. In those texts, particularly the last two, strong expressions are used. Persons are said to have been in "the

77 It may be noted that even when the apostle speaks of the man who is disputatious to the point of being divisive, and who has received repeated admonitions about this, his counsel does not absolutely prohibit any speaking with him. At Titus 3:10, the Greek word sometimes rendered "reject" actually has the meaning of "begging off from" or "excusing oneself." (Compare the use of the same term at Hebrews 12:25; Luke 14:18, 19.) The *New English Bible* renders it by "have done with him." So, even in this case there is still allowance for common courtesy in dealing with such ones, politely but firmly excusing oneself from being drawn into useless debates with them.

78 Compare Galatians 2:4, 5.

79 1 Corinthians 15:12-57.

80 See pages 188, 189 in Chapter 6.

> snare of the Devil," having been "caught alive by him for the will of that one,' "misled from the truth," perhaps having "a multitude of sins," yet it seems implied that there was freedom to do what could be done to admonish and restore these persons. Shouldn't we be doing that today? No friendly or intimate association such as would imply approval of their wrongdoing need exist. The Greek verb used at 2 Thessalonians 3:14 in the expression "stop associating" is the very same word used at 1 Corinthians 5:11 ("quit mixing in company with"). This latter text we have used to apply to persons whom we disfellowship or 'quit mixing in company with.' But 2 Thessalonians shows that to quit mixing in company with someone does not rule out admonishing him, hence speaking to him. If we say that by giving Scriptural admonition or reproof to them we are guilty of spiritual fellowship with them, would this not also mean that when we witness to persons of different faiths (even clergymen) we have spiritual fellowship with them? Is our view of disfellowshiping really governed by these texts, or have we been reading into them more rigidity than is there?

As in other cases, the Scriptural reasons presented were both solid and thought-provoking. Yet, as was typical of Governing Body discussions then and thereafter, they received only the briefest of consideration. The material submitted was read out and then opinions were expressed as to the advisability or inadvisabilty of making adjustments—not through a prayerful consideration of the Scriptural evidence, but simply on the basis of what the particular member speaking viewed as "advisable" for organization policy. The traditional position was retained. Twenty years later it was, if anything, even more rigid than it was then.

11

The Misuse of Disfellowshiping

We are not dictators over your faith, but are fellow workers with you for your happiness.
—2 Corinthians 1:24, *Jerusalem Bible.*

IN BOTH *spirit* and *method*, the Watch Tower organization's disfellowshiping policy conforms far more to that of the religious leaders in power in the Jewish nation in the first century than to that of Christ and his apostles. The effects are often tragic.

What this can and does produce is illustrated by a letter received from Annette Stuart, then a 77-year-old grandmother in West Brookfield, Massachusetts, who had been a Witness for many years.[1] She related that when her granddaughter was fourteen, the girl's mother encouraged her to take the step of baptism as one of Jehovah's Witnesses. Three years later, the girl made known her feelings that the pressures placed on her as a Witness were too much. Elders were summoned and she was adamant in stating that she did not intend to go to any more meetings. The elders' decision was that 'since she had disfellowshiped herself, they had no other choice than to disfellowship her.' At the time the organizational policy did not call for full shunning of disfellowshiped family members and, as Annette says, "At least the family was still intact."

Then, in 1981, the policy changed. Annette states:

> My granddaughter was now cut off from her family and relatives. I could not turn her out of our home. She needed us more than ever! Her mother honored the new rule. She had nothing more to do with her daughter or with me. That of course was her choice.
>
> Two elders came to my home to give me a choice. They voiced the opinion that since my husband was not a J.W. they had no right to prohibit my granddaughter from coming to our home. My husband had brought that out to the elders previously.
>
> The elders told me I had to walk out of the room when my granddaughter came to visit. I was not to eat at the same table if she stayed to share a meal with my husband. In my mind what they asked me to do was unloving, inhuman and not Christian. I told

1 Letter dated July 29, 1987.

> them I could not do what they asked. I remember crying bitterly at the time. They stood there frozen without compassion.

At age 73, *and after thirty years of association*, the girl's grandmother was now also disfellowshiped. Her husband, who was never a Witness, saw his family suddenly torn away from him. He wrote to the Watch Tower headquarters for help but the elders' action was upheld. As Mrs. Stuart writes:

> My daughter, son, grandchildren, great grandchildren—I have not set eyes on these beloved people for over four years! My son and daughter live in the same town as we do. . . . My sin was having my disfellowshiped granddaughter in my home.

How can such action possibly be justified on the claim that it contributes to "keeping the organization clean"? Is it not rather a demonstration of the position that 'no one can fail to heed the demands of organizational authority with impunity'? The elders, in fact, informed Annette that 'she would be an example to others who feel they can break the rule.' The headquarters organization supported their position. This grandmother in her seventies was indeed 'made to feel the weight of authority,' a treatment that Jesus described as typical of the world, not of Christianity.—Matthew 20:25, *NEB*.

Just how devastatingly disruptive of family relationships the organization's rigid policy can be is demonstrated in the case of Richard Guimond and his family. A Witness for 30 years, Guimond had come to have serious questions about certain Watch Tower doctrines and this led to "investigative" meetings with elders. He found he had to suggest to the elders that the Scriptures might be brought into the picture to resolve his questions. He writes, "The answer was always the same: 'We have to recognize God's channel of communication.'" In 1982 the Wilmot Flat, New Hampshire, elders disfellowshiped Guimond for having such doubts. Some of his family members supported the excommunication action, others did not. In 1984, he described the ultimate result, saying:

> Our own drama continues. On January 5, my wife and our two mothers (widows, ages 72 and 77) were "disfellowshiped" by the three elders of the Wilmot Flat congregation. This incalculable cruelty will cause them much heartache. The last thread of communication with our Witness daughter is now severed. My wife will also lose contact with her two sisters and their families. My own mother will probably be shunned by her three granddaughters who remain as Jehovah's Witnesses. Saddest of all, my dear mother-in-law undoubtedly will be rejected by her two daughters, her nine

grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. All of this done because of the "rules" of the Watch Tower Society.

There are hundreds, even thousands of similar cases today. Evidence that they are not some anomaly, or simply due to the narrowmindedness of a few local elders, can be seen from a letter written by the Watch Tower Society's Service Department to a young man in the northeast whose father had been disfellowshiped, the only charge against him being that he did not accept as Scriptural certain teachings of the organization. The son wrote to the Brooklyn headquarters saying that his sister and her husband now had no association with his father and he felt that this was disrespectful to his parents. The letter he received is here shown (his name and address being blocked out at his request for reasons of privacy):

WATCHTOWER
BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC.

CABLE WATCHTOWER

25 COLUMBIA HEIGHTS, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201, U.S.A. PHONE (212) 625-3600

SCE:SSH July 14, 1983

[redacted]

Dear Brother [redacted]

We have your letter in which you say that you are troubled by a problem that the elders seem unable to resolve. Your father has been disfellowshipped and as a result of this your sister and her husband do not have any association with your father. You seem to feel that this is disrespectful to your parents.

It is most unfortunate to hear that your father has been disfellowshipped. His taking action that resulted in his being disfellowshipped has brought about a Scriptural barrier between him and those loyal members of the family who continue to faithfully serve Jehovah. The loyal ones have not been the creators of the problem but, rather, the one who is disfellowshipped has caused it. Therefore, it would not be appropriate on your part to find fault with your sister if she respectfully obeys the Scriptural command at 1 Corinthians 5:11.

A person who is disfellowshipped has been spiritually cut off from the congregation; the former spiritual ties have been completely severed. This is true even with respect to relatives, including those within his immediate family circle. Thus, family members—while acknowledging family ties, will no longer have any spiritual fellowship with the disfellowshipped relative. (1 Sam. 28:6; Prov. 15:8, 9) While you and your sister may find it necessary from time to time to care for necessary family matters in regard to your parents, the direction at 1 Corinthians 5:11 would prohibit any association on a regular basis. We can appreciate that sentiment and family ties are particularly strong between parents and children but, in the final analysis, we will not benefit anyone or please God if we allow emotion to lead us into ignoring his wise counsel and guidance. We need to display our complete confidence in His perfect righteousness and ways, including his provision to disfellowshipped unrepentant wrongdoers. If we remain loyal to God and the congregation, the wrongdoer in time may take a lesson from that, repent and be reinstated into the congregation. It is our hope that will be the case with your father.

Faithfully yours,

cc: [redacted]

Watchtower B. & T. Society
OF NEW YORK, INC.

Thus, conscientious disagreement with any position or teaching of the organization supposedly classes this man with the one described at 1 Corinthians 5:11, as a "wicked man," categorized as on a level with sexually immoral persons, greedy persons, extortioners and idolaters. The responsibility for the family division is all placed on him.

Yet the undeniable fact is that in almost all such cases the division results, not from the personal conviction or feelings of the family members of the disfellowshiped or disassociated person, but solely because of the organizational policy laid out for them. This is obvious from the immediate change in attitude that Witnesses worldwide made after the appearance of articles in the August 1, 1974, *Watchtower* which greatly moderated the position taken regarding the attitude of family members toward a disfellowshiped relative. The information was received gratefully by Witness families. Then, in 1981, the earlier, harsh policy was reinstated. Disfellowshiped family members were again subject to great coldness, often totally cut off.[2] But if today that policy were again "officially" moderated, most Witnesses would unhesitatingly renew family ties, particularly in those cases where their only reason for rejecting a family member is that he or she is simply in a disfellowshiped "state" and not because that one's present conduct causes them honestly to consider him or her as an "evil" or

2 The moderating 1974 articles were written by me on assignment by the Governing Body. A nephew of mine who was disfellowshiped and whose parents and brother and sister had not conversed with him for years, was contacted by them as a direct result of these articles and soon thereafter reinstated.

"corrupting" person. I cannot believe that Annette Stuart's family really believe their now 80-year-old grandmother to be such. And I think there is little question that in the great majority of cases Witnesses neither *wanted* to adopt the rigid position they took, nor were they genuinely *convinced* of the rightness of it. It was something imposed upon them by the religious authority, and the responsibility for family division in all such cases rightly rests with that authority.

The emotional suffering produced is incalculable. In the case of one disfellowshiped woman in Massachusetts, her mother, living in Maine, became gravely ill and died (in the mid-1980s). Though knowing this daughter's address, neither her Witness family members nor the elders informed her of her mother's illness, her death or the funeral. She first learned of it after her mother had already been buried. She stated that the torturing anguish resulting from being thus deprived of seeing her dying mother or of having any opportunity to express, or attempt to express, her love simply would not go away. How can any of this possibly be harmonized with the personality of a God of love and of his compassionate Son? Why should anyone feel drawn to a system contributing to such actions?

Inflexible Enforcement of Organizational Law

The manner in which elders *apply* Watch Tower policies clearly shows that they do indeed view them as law. The inflexible attitude produced—or, at the very least, condoned—by the organizational headquarters causes elders to view neither circumstance, age, health, years of association, nor any such factor as affecting the requirement of full compliance with all organizational rules, full acceptance of all its teachings.

One example of the almost mindless rigidity so often created is the case of a Witness in the state of Maine, David Haynes, who operated a security alarm service. Beginning in the 1970s and over a period of years, his business installed many burglar and fire alarm systems. Some of these were in churches and church schools. Then, in the 1980s came a request for him to meet with a congregational committee of three Witness elders, Spear, Maddock and Wentworth.

They informed him that he could no longer continue such installation work in religious buildings; to do so would make him liable for disfellowshiping. He agreed to stop. Later, the elders informed him that he must also stop *servicing* the systems already installed. He told them he would comply and arranged for his service manager (not a Witness) to go

on his own time (as on a Saturday) and do such servicing and also provided that this man would receive *all* the compensation involved.

Even this was not satisfactory to the elders, however, for the systems were tied in with a central monitoring system at his business's office. The elders informed him that he could no longer *monitor* the systems installed in those churches and church schools without jeopardizing his standing in the congregation. He offered to see what he could do to transfer the monitoring to some other alarm service business, though this might take some time. He was granted a specific period. His business was going through some changes of equipment at the time and this contributed to his not meeting the deadline set. He asked for an extension, telling the elders that he did not want to damage his business by peremptorily cutting off service to these customers. They granted him an additional month. When it was up, since he had not accomplished the transferral by that time, though he literally begged and pleaded for consideration and forbearance, he was disfellowshiped. He had been associated with the organization for fifteen years. He appealed the decision of the local "judicial committee" and in meeting with an "appeal committee" tried to reason with them, citing examples of those who work for the electrical power company or who install and service telephones and lines for churches.[3] The reply was that 'he did not *have* to supply his alarm service' and that therefore they were upholding the disfellowshiping decision.

The elders doubtless never allowed themselves to question whether any of this legalistic harassment really made sense, or how much it was like the critical viewpoint of the Pharisees in condemning the disciples for picking and eating some grains of wheat on the Sabbath. They quite likely focused on the thought that they were being "loyal to the organization."

Of a quite different nature, but illustrating the same attitude, is the case in 1982 of George West, an elderly Witness associated with the Maynard, Massachusetts, congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. He developed bone cancer and in time deteriorated to the point of requiring hospitalization as a terminal case; his head was supported in a cage arrangement since his neck bones could no longer bear the weight.

Local elders heard that George West had submitted to a blood transfusion and made several attempts to try to talk with him, in spite of his extreme condition and against his wife's wishes. Finally, one evening they succeeded in getting in to see her husband and under interrogation he acknowledged having accepted the

3 In appeal cases, the appeals committees are usually selected and appointed directly by the Service Department in Brooklyn.

transfusion. His reason? His children from a previous marriage had heard he was dying and called to let him know they were coming from the Midwest to visit him at the hospital. He had not seen them since childhood. He decided to take the transfusion to extend his life a little longer in order to be reunited with his children.[4]

The elders disfellowshiped George West only days before he died.

Again, what kind of mentality is it that could in any way say that such actions toward a man on his deathbed are in the least reflective of Christianity, or that they—by any sane reasoning—can be conceived as contributing toward a "clean congregation"? The only practical effect was that no funeral service by Witnesses could be conducted for the man. And, for most Witnesses, by his dying in a "disfellowshiped state" he would be viewed as not qualifying for a resurrection, having died outside the organization. Rather than cleanness, in reality, such action produces a stain of dishonor, for it is an action strongly colored with an unfeeling attitude more representative of Pharisaism, and its intense preoccupation with religious "cleanness," than Christianity. It was as if the organization's representatives felt they would be remiss if they allowed the man to die without a disfellowshiped label affixed to his disease-crippled body.

The question is once more rightly asked, who bears the *primary* responsibility for the attitude producing such actions? While there is much evidence that the spirit shown by different bodies of elders may vary widely, the blame for the rigid, unmerciful attitude shown in such cases simply cannot be passed off as related just to the particular elders involved. The frequency and widespread nature of this rigidity point to its having some central source.

Since all disfellowshiping actions are reported to the headquarters organization, it is not unaware of what is happening. The pathetic case of Percy Harding illustrates this, for it took place virtually on the international headquarters' doorstep.

In 1910, when about twenty years old, Percy, a native of western Canada, began reading the writings of Pastor Russell and in six months had read some 3,000 pages of material. He resigned from the Protestant church of which he was a member and found himself totally alone in his new belief among his townspeople. He began "witnessing" and formed two groups in the area and held baptisms at a nearby river. He writes:

4 These facts were printed in a letter to the editorial column of the *Concord Monitor* of December 8, 1984. No one did, or could, refute them.

> In 1918 I quit a good job to become a colporteur. My territory covered hundreds of square miles, mostly along the railways, from southern Alberta to the Pacific coast. I also covered the country territory on foot, carrying two small bags of books. Often I walked as much as 15 to 25 miles a day.

After seven years of this activity, on May 25, 1925, he went to Brooklyn, New York, to serve at the Watch Tower headquarters. After about four years, the attitude developing under the presidency of Rutherford, and the conduct of some exercising oversight left Percy disillusioned. In 1929 he terminated his work at the headquarters.

Despite this, he remained associated and active with the same congregation in Brooklyn for the following fifty-six years. Of what then happened he writes:

> From May, 1925, until December, 1981, I remained in the same congregation until I was disfellowshiped for talking about God's Word to a few of my friends. This was unbelievable, and, so far as the Society is concerned, a disgraceful performance. The judicial committee had a letter from another board of elders in a different congregation. They had disfellowshiped a friend of mine. They questioned him at length about other people he had talked to about the Bible. He caved in and told them, mentioning my name among others. So this letter from the elders, including things I and others had said, was presented to me with a request that I comment on it. I told the committee that I had nothing to say, that what went on between me and my friends was strictly a private matter and was nobody else's business. They promised me a copy of the letter, but I never received it.
>
> Then they started asking questions, the most important being, "Do you believe that the Society is God's organization and that it is bringing forth truth?" So I said, "There is nothing in God's Word to indicate that God ever used an organization' to bring forth truth. From Moses, down through all the prophets to John and the Revelation, it was always an individual."
>
> There were three committee meetings, the last being at Bethel. The night I was disfellowshiped, Harry Peloyan [a longtime member of the Watch Tower's writing staff] made a speech at the Kingdom Hall, bringing a charge that was not even discussed in any of the committee meetings, that of disrupting the unity of the congregation. He misused 2 John 10, 11, in instructing 175 people to cut me cold. After the meeting everyone filed out, passing me by like I was a leper.

Percy was 91 years old and in poor health. Whether one may consider his understanding of certain scriptures as correct or mistaken, the fact remains that the issue arose, not because he was creating a disturbance, one that was congregationally evident, but because of private conversations with friends. No one in the congregation had complained of his being an "agitator" and the

matter became an issue only as the result of a letter from another congregation that initiated investigation and interrogation by elders into his private remarks on Scriptural subjects among personal friends. (Compare the accusation against the apostle Paul and his defense at Acts 24:5-13.) On a trip to the northeast in 1982, I visited Percy Harding at his home on 6th Street in Brooklyn. He sat, seemingly dwarfed by the large chair, a small, frail-looking man obviously weakened by age and illness.

I asked myself how anyone in his right mind could view a person like that, having no position or particular influence, as constituting such a danger that, despite his some *seventy years of association*, it was deemed necessary that he be disfellowshiped and cut off from all his lifetime associates. I thought that an organization must be extremely unsure of itself, feel an incredible sense of vulnerability, to ever consider such a frail, aged man as a threat. Concerning the effect the disfellowshiping had on his personal circumstances, he writes:

Percy Harding, disfellowshiped at age 91.

> Before this there were two [Witness] nurses who visited me, almost every week. They did some things for me that I was unable to do for myself, and, more importantly, they were on call if I needed them. Since I will be 92 years old on August 18, who knows when an emergency may arrive? After I was disfellowshiped, I called one of the nurses. Her husband answered the phone and said, "Ann is not allowed to talk to you."
>
> Let me say again that the only thing the elders have against me is that I talked to a few of my friends about the Bible.

In my conversations with Percy I found him to be a blunt-speaking man. He may well have been quite blunt in his discussions with the elders who judged him. But even if he had been more than blunt—had been caustic, even cantankerous—how could that possibly justify cutting off a 91-year-old man, single, ill, with no rela-

tives within hundreds of miles, writing him off, along with his over *seventy years of active association*, as someone now to be ignored and forgotten? What heinous crime had he committed that could justify this? I find it difficult to understand how anyone claiming to be a disciple of the true Shepherd of the sheep, Jesus Christ, could be party to such an action, one that in my mind merits no less description than heartless. Yet, as stated, it took place on the very "doorstep" of the world headquarters of the Watch Tower Society.

Percy is now dead, having died in his sleep on February 3, 1984. During the twenty-five months following his disfellowshipment, *not a single person from the congregation with which he had been associated for 56 years came to see him or inquire of his needs*.[5]

The Ultimate Sin: Disagreeing with the Organization

Percy Harding's case is also illustrative of the organization's insistence on total acceptance of all of its teachings. Consider, then, these quotations from Watch Tower representatives in which they state:

> If someone doesn't want to live by our principles, he's free to leave. There's no badgering here, no physical or emotional harassment . . . . We don't dictate from headquarters.[6]
>
> We're not spiritual policemen . . . . We don't try to stifle anyone in his opinion.[7]
>
> If people do not want to stay they are free to leave. . . . I cannot understand why those disagreeing simply do not leave quietly.[8]

I am sure that all these men know that the picture they paint is not in accord with the reality. For they know what happens today when one of Jehovah's Witnesses endeavors to "leave quietly." The actual situation is similar to that a soldier would face if he went to his commanding officer and said, "Sir, based on my conscience I have decided to leave and I just wanted to let you know that I will go quietly and not disturb the troops in any way." Unless he quickly recanted, the consequences the soldier would face—dishonorable discharge or, in time of war, execution by a firing squad—are paralleled in a spiritual way by those Jehovah's Witnesses face.

5 A friend of mine living in the New York area visited him on a weekly basis and eventually, when Percy's funds were running out, arranged for his gaining entrance to the nursing home where he died.
6 Walter Graham, Canadian branch, quoted in a Toronto newspaper.
7 Traveling overseer, now a Governing Body member, Samuel Herd, quoted in *Chicago Tribune*.
8 Robert Balzar, Watch Tower headquarters public relations man.

Those who think of "quietly withdrawing" know that they have a gun at their heads, the weapon being the threat of official disfellowshipment (or that of being officially pronounced "disassociated," which is the same weapon, producing the same results, but under a different name). Though not physically placed before a firing squad, any Witness attempting to leave the organization for conscientious reasons can do so only at the risk of being labeled heretical, unfit for true Christians (other Jehovah's Witnesses) to associate with, someone that even family members should treat as an "outcast." The organizational policies allow no possible way to leave with honor. Only a person insensitive to human feelings could think that there is "no emotional harassment" involved.

This situation has become particularly evident since 1980. Following the disfellowshipment of a few members of the headquarters staff for not fully accepting all Watch Tower teachings, and also my resignation from the Governing Body, the direction now taken by the organization was exemplified by a letter to its traveling representatives, dated September 1, 1980.[9] That letter spelled out a policy that even to persist in—not *talking* about—but simply *believing* anything different from what the "slave class" provided constituted apostatizing and could lead to disfellowshipment. While it called on elders to be "discreet and kindly" in their inquiries as to members' personal beliefs, we have already seen, in the case of Percy Harding and other cases already cited, what this directive produced in the way of "kindly, discreet inquiry." The letter opened the way for men inclined toward dogmatism and intolerance to vent those qualities in their dealings with the flock, and caused otherwise caring men to act unfeelingly. Simple questions resulting from lack of knowledge are allowed, even welcomed. But when questions are raised that are the result of serious investigation and knowledgeable thinking and that involve a questioning of any of the organization's teachings, the practice overwhelmingly is to attack the questioner and his or her motives rather than address the question.

What had already taken place at the Brooklyn headquarters, documented in *Crisis of Conscience*, illustrates to what extent the qualities of kindness and discretion were displayed and how empty those expressions were. That headquarters example was thereafter reflected all over the United States and in many other lands. The objective has been to create a sterile atmosphere, where the organization's teachings and policies can circulate free from any

9 A photocopy of this letter may be seen in *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 341, 342.

risk of having to confront serious questioning or of having to overcome Scriptural objections and adverse evidence. Is this overstated? Consider just a few examples, typical of scores of others:

In *Crisis of Conscience* I related the disfellowshipment of Edward Dunlap who, after over fifty years of association, most of them spent in "Bethel service," was in effect "put out on the street" at nearly seventy years of age, disfellowshiped for having expressed viewpoints in conversation among friends that did not conform to all of the organization's teachings. I mentioned his returning to the home city of his childhood, Oklahoma City, to take up his earlier trade of wallpapering along with his brother, Marion. What resulted from this?

Marion Dunlap was then the appointed "city overseer" for the several congregations in Oklahoma City. He too had been a Witness for nearly fifty years, always very active in field service and meeting participation. When he offered lodging and work to his seventy-year-old disfellowshiped brother, Marion himself came under investigation. He was subsequently disfellowshiped and within about a year five other members of the Dunlap family were disfellowshiped. They were not persons engaging in wrongdoing of any kind; they had not sought to stir up trouble or engage in campaigning or protesting; they simply felt bound by conscience to let their beliefs be governed by the Word of God rather than by the word of fallible men or organizations.

Another Witness, a professor at Oklahoma State University, expressed himself as feeling it was a shame that anyone with Ed Dunlap's teaching ability should not have an outlet for that ability. He helped arrange for Ed to conduct some classes at the university. This brought him under the elders' scrutiny and he too was soon disfellowshiped.

While it is true that in some of the cases those involved chose on their own to discontinue meeting attendance, this in no way reflected any desire on their part to cease friendship or conversation with their previous associates among Jehovah's Witnesses. It in no way implied any rejection by them of such persons or any adverse feelings toward them. The complete "cutting off" of relationships came solely from the aggressive actions of elders.

The unusual zeal elders show in pursuing any suspected case of disaffection is illustrated in the actions taken at a little place in Mississippi called Dancy, small enough not to appear on most maps. The Walker family lived here and in the 1940s the mother and, later, three of her daughters became Witnesses. (In time, the Kingdom Hall was built just across the road from the Walker home,

the land being donated by Ray Phillips, the husband of one of the daughters, who was also the builder of the Hall.)

Sue Walker, one of the three daughters, became a "pioneer" and later graduated from the Watch Tower's missionary school, Gilead. She spent twelve years in missionary service in Bolivia under difficult conditions. In one assignment, a town on the edge of the jungle called Trinidad, she and her partner were totally separated from association with other Witnesses. The low-lying town flooded during certain seasons and the only way to get around was by small boats. (Sue recalls studying the Bible with a woman who always kept a stick by her side. She wondered why until one day a snake came up out of the water onto the porch and the woman calmly picked up the stick and knocked it back into the water.) Sue and her partner stayed in the assignment, putting up with sickness and poor diet for years.

In 1962, Sue was transferred from Bolivia to the Dominican Republic where my wife and I were stationed. Times were turbulent there, including a full-scale revolution in 1965, and more than once Sue had to take cover from gunfire when on her way home from conducting Bible studies. Though having health problems, to her twelve years of service in Bolivia she added another thirteen years spent in the Dominican Republic. After these twenty-five years as a missionary, Sue felt it her duty to return to Dancy, Mississippi, to care for her aging parents (now in their eighties). Though she continued to "pioneer" on her return, she was distressed to find that many local Witnesses viewed her as having "quit her assignment." Rumors even circulated that she had been sent home by the Society for wrong conduct, which was totally false.

I find it hard to believe that anyone knowing Sue Walker could speak thus of her. As branch overseer in both Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, I had had dealings with easily more than a hundred missionaries. Of them all, none was less likely to give cause for complaint than Sue. Even-tempered, not easily upset, she went about her work in an uncomplaining, quiet way. Few missionaries did as much personal Bible reading as she did. This, combined with actual experience over many years and in several countries, experience that brought home to her the degree to which the organization failed to reflect a truly Christian spirit, eventually caused her to reassess her conviction of its being God's sole channel and chosen instrument. Her sisters had reached a similar point of reassessment. What followed again illustrates quite graphically the way the organization's "shepherding" program so often functions when elders view members as "straying" from the flock.

The first to draw their attention was Sue's niece, also named Sue (Phillips). Convinced that the Society's teachings did not accurately represent the first-century good news, she had quietly withdrawn from meeting attendance. A district overseer, a circuit overseer and a local elder visited her, questioning her for about an hour as to the reasons for her nonattendance. She explained her feelings, that she had been doing much personal study of the Scriptures and could no longer conscientiously support some of the beliefs taught by the organization. She mentioned, among other things, the limiting of Christ's mediatorship to a special class and the impression created that salvation is something earned through specific works. As happens in thousands of similar situations, the manner of dealing with such questions is to focus, not on the Scriptures, but on "the organization." Thus, the local elder asked her, "Where did you learn what you know about God's purposes?"—the customary and expected answer being, "From God's organization." But Sue replied, "From the Bible." They assured her that 'they studied more than she did and had their assigned positions in the organization.' This was the essence of their counsel, principal stress being laid on the organization's importance, and they soon left.

A few weeks after this "shepherding visit," Sue returned from a trip and found a notice to appear for a judicial hearing that very day, January 3, 1982. She had arrived home seriously ill and entered the hospital that same day. It was twelve days before she recovered sufficiently to leave. During that time none of the local Witnesses visited her, although two women Witnesses phoned her mother to inquire about her. During the twelve days of her hospitalization, the congregational "shepherds" took the course of those in the parable to whom it is said, "I was sick and . . . you never cared to visit me."[10]

Sue returned home on a Friday. *Exactly two days after leaving the hospital*, on Sunday, a local elder phoned her to set up a new date for a judicial hearing. She informed him that she had no intention of going to such a hearing, having just left the hospital and still not well. The elder mentioned his having heard of her being in the hospital and said he was sorry to hear she had been ill. He went on to say that, if she would not attend the hearing, then, "We may have to take some action." Sue replied, "Well, I guess you'll do whatever you want to do." His response, rather heated and quite emphatic, was, "We'll do whatever the organization tells us to do."

Three days later, Sue wrote a letter to the congregation and to those well known to her. In it she included these statements:

10 Matthew 25:43, *PME.*

> For over a year now I have been reading and studying God's Word, the Bible, very diligently. Never in my life have I devoted so much of my time, thought and prayer to Bible study. What I began to learn and to see has caused me to turn my whole life course around. The decisions I have made came after much study, thought and prayer. They were not overnight decisions. I love Jehovah God and Jesus Christ very dearly and I don't want to do anything that would displease them. I give my wholehearted support to the Way of Christianity as the best, most rewarding way of life. I want no other life-style for myself. I accept the Bible as the inspired Word of God and as my guide book to living. To me the good news about Jesus Christ, what he did for all mankind and what it will mean for all exercising faith in him is the most wonderful, exciting news there is. For any Christian, loyalty to Jehovah God, Jesus Christ, the Bible, the good news and the way of Christianity must be given priority over everything else. My loyalty and support absolutely go to all these. After months and months of Bible study and much prayer I came to the conclusion that the things I formerly believed were simply not scriptural. As a Christian I saw there were changes to be made, there were simply some things I could no longer give my support to.

A few days after receipt of the letter, the elders announced to the Mantee Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses (which meets in Dancy), that Sue Phillips had been disfellowshiped "for conduct unbecoming a Christian." [11] A note to this effect, signed only "Mantee Congregation" was sent to her home.

In all, the local elders and traveling overseers in their "shepherding efforts" had spent approximately one and a half hours with this young woman who from childhood had been raised as a Witness. They doubtless felt they had accomplished the "extended, kindly efforts" referred to in the Watch Tower headquarters directive. Apparently the clear evidence her letter gave that she had deep respect for the Scriptures and a sincere concern for pleasing God and Christ did not warrant any forbearance on the elders' part, any feeling that there was good reason for showing tolerant patience, or any thought that perhaps by a calm, gentle, non-confrontational approach they might resolve her questions. No time was lost in making official announcement that she was now no longer a fit associate for the congregation members.

It is a frequent practice to imply in Watch Tower publications that those who do not agree with the organization are motivated by such negative emotions as pride, rebelliousness, a desire to escape from door-to-door activity due to a lack of humility, and simi-

11 This is a standard expression, deliberately left vague to avoid legal problems.

lar charges. I do not doubt that there may be some individuals of that kind. But I also know that this has proven completely without foundation in case after case. It certainly was *obviously* false regarding Sue Phillips' aunt, former missionary Sue Walker. In her more than forty years of service, she had beyond question spent far, far more hours in going from door to door than anyone in the area, including the elders and traveling overseers. On returning from missionary service, she had continued in active association with the Mantee congregation until this point, regularly attending meetings, actively engaging in "witnessing" and in conducting home Bible studies with interested persons. In view of the organizational dealings with her niece, however, she felt matters had reached a stage calling for a decision. As she told her niece, "I'm the next one they'll come after." So, she wrote a letter of resignation and on Sunday walked out of her house and crossed the road to the Kingdom Hall and personally handed a copy to each of the elders.

Sue Walker was then 63 years of age. She had spent forty-two of those years as a Witness, thirty-five of them in full-time service, and twenty-five of these in missionary work in foreign countries. She had foregone marriage and children, had endured many privations, had labored in primitive areas, had steadily sought to live a life in close harmony with Bible principles. Would it not be normal to wish to retain such a person in a congregation, to feel that it would be a definite loss no longer to have her association and example? If one felt that the Witness beliefs were indeed sound and solidly based on Scripture, would one not feel moved to make whatever effort might be possible at least to continue contact with such a person with a hope of eventually reconciling differences? I would think so. But the organization-trained elders evidently did not; after receiving her letter they made no effort to discuss its contents with her, punctually announced her official "disassociation," and, due to the organizational policy, from that time forward Sue Walker in effect became a nonperson for the congregation members, not to be spoken to or associated with.

This is all the more remarkable in that Sue Walker continued to help her aged mother cross the road to the Kingdom Hall whenever she expressed the wish, quietly sitting through meetings with her mother, though her presence was not acknowledged by any in attendance, doing this entirely out of consideration for her mother's remaining as a Witness. When her mother's health eventually caused her to give up meeting attendance, she rarely received any visits from congregation members, due to their reticence to being

brought into contact with the "disassociated" daughter. Her mother's opinion of the organization changed and when her husband (never a Witness) died, she joined with her daughters in asking me to travel there to conduct the funeral. Before she herself died, she expressed the wish that I conduct her funeral as well. In a small rural community where everyone knows everyone else, the hundred or so persons who came to the funeral could not help but notice that, although their neighbor, Mrs. Walker, was not disfellowshiped nor had ever "disassociated" herself, none of the Witnesses with whom she had worshiped for more than forty years were in attendance. Organizational policy, not personal sentiments, kept them away.

What followed Sue Walker's "disassociation" announcement is, if anything, even more revealing of the organizational spirit fostered. Some months earlier, her older sister Lulu and her husband (parents of Sue Phillips) had moved from the Dancy area to Mississippi's Gulf Coast area. Because of having arrived at conscientious conclusions about the organization, and being fully aware of the probable consequences of this, they purposely did not advise the Mantee elders of their future address and, on arrival at their new location in Long Beach, purposely sought to remain "incognito" as regards the congregation there. They hoped thus to withdraw quietly, avoid confrontational interrogation and the unpleasantness of judicial proceedings.

They were thus surprised when, not long after the Mantee congregation disfellowshiped their daughter, two elders from the Long Beach, Mississippi, congregation, complete strangers to them personally, unexpectedly showed up at their door, unannounced. How these men knew of them can only be surmised, but the elders' statements made clear that it was a follow-up on the judicial action taken hundreds of miles away with regard to their daughter. The elders "shepherding" efforts consisted of questioning Ray and Lulu Phillips as to their beliefs, asking if they felt the same as their daughter did. They replied in the affirmative. Within days came a notice to attend a judicial hearing. They had no wish to undergo that experience and said so. They, too, were disfellowshiped.

One wonders what possible way there is for anyone to "leave quietly" as Society representatives, including Robert Balzer of the Brooklyn headquarters, argue they should. The claim that such pursuit by elders is necessary to "keep the organization clean" seems especially hollow, in view of the fact that this couple in their

late sixties were endeavoring to live quietly and unnoticed, with no connection with any congregation when the action was taken.

One of Mrs. Walker's three Witness daughters now remained, Lavenia, a very mild-mannered person then living in the New Orleans, Louisiana, area. When first moving there, Lavenia had attended a few meetings at the local Kingdom Hall but, like her sister Lulu, had decided to withdraw quietly. During the same time her sister in Mississippi was being "investigated," she received a visit from a local elder accompanied by a visiting circuit overseer, coming to inquire about her lack of meeting attendance. She explained why she was not attending. No one can question the propriety of these men showing interest in her or—believing as they did that her spiritual welfare was at risk—their endeavoring to encourage her to attend their meetings. That interest is certainly understandable, even commendable. What they actually did, however, is puzzling indeed. On hearing her explanation as to why she was not attending, the circuit overseer wrote out a short statement and said that if she did not plan to attend any more (as the wording of the statement read) she could simply sign it. She did. The result? She was now considered officially "disassociated," to be viewed the same as if she had committed some act calling for excommunication, no longer to be talked to or associated with. The shepherding efforts, portrayed in Watch Tower publications as extended loving efforts at "readjusting" and recovering strayed sheep, had taken at most one hour. Yet Lavenia had been associated for some thirty years.

In all, the time of Witness association of these five family members totaled some 200 years. The time spent by Witness elders in supposed efforts to 'restore them to the flock' amounted at most to a total of 5 or 6 hours.

Surveillance and Use of an Informer System

> *Put no trust in a friend, have no confidence in a loved one; guard the doors of your mouth from her who lies in your embrace.*—Micah 7:5, *New Revised Standard Version.*

This same pattern has been repeated again and again, in place after place, country after country. Witnesses feel duty bound to report on fellow Witnesses who may deviate from organizational policies or teachings.

In an article titled, "A Time to Speak—When?" the *Watchtower* of September 1, 1987, sets forth the official position that even where

it means violating existing standards, even an oath of confidentiality—as in the case of a doctor, hospital nurse, lawyer, or other person privy to confidential records or information—a Witness has the responsibility to reveal infractions of the organization's rules by another member if these involve what are often called "disfellowshiping offenses." The offender is to be counseled to confess his or her infraction to the elders, but if this is not done then the Witness knowing of the infraction is told that loyalty to God requires him or her to report the matter to the elders. In only one area is confidentiality viewed as sacrosanct—and that is when it comes to the organization's own matters, including meetings held by elders in judicial hearings.[12]

Incredible as it may seem, less than four years after this policy was instituted, in an article on coping with hospitalization, the *Awake!* magazine of March 8, 1991 (page 7) published "A Patient's Bill of Rights" and among these rights listed this:

> 6. Expect that all communications and records pertaining to his care will be treated as confidential.

As we have seen, the organization's policy nullifies this right if it interferes with its rule that any Witness having knowledge of another's infraction of its rules should reveal this, despite his or her being a doctor or nurse.

An article by Dr. Gerald L. Bullock, of Plano, Texas, published in *Medical Economics* of August 19, 1985, makes plain that Witnesses do indeed feel compelled to act as informers to elder bodies, despite the seriousness of the consequences—consequences not just to themselves but to others. Dr. Bullock relates that he hired a young Witness woman who had been his patient and a family friend for years. He describes "Toni" (a name he gives her, not her real name) as a good and cheerful worker. All was fine until another Witness woman (whom he calls "Linda," and who was known by "Toni") came to his office. She claimed that she was raped by several men after going to a bar in Houston, Texas, and had contracted gonorrhea. She had visited another doctor and now wanted a follow-up culture done to see if she was free from the disease. He felt it was not his position to question the truth of her rape claim and simply performed the culture, finding her free of infection. A few weeks later, Linda phoned him, angrily informing him that she had been disfellowshiped and was now shunned by her own family. She threatened a lawsuit, saying she was certain Toni had

12 Actually, it is a not infrequent fact that elders' wives learn of the cases they discuss.

been the supplier of information to the elders about her case, taking the information from Dr. Bullock's office records. He states:

> I was stunned. I couldn't believe that Toni would gossip about a patient. I'd gone into confidentiality at length before hiring her. And my personnel manual specifies the penalty of immediate termination for an employee who violates patient confidence.
>
> When I confronted Toni, I was even more stunned at her open admission that she was indeed the talebearer. She explained that in her religion every member is expected to report to church elders any other member who violates its teachings and discipline. When she reviewed Linda's chart for charges and insurance information and read what Linda had told me, she spent some time deciding where her primary loyalty lay. In the end, she took the story to the elders.

It may be noted that, in her meditation on loyalty, she did not decide that she had an obligation to her employer and friend to inform him what she was going to do with information from his office records. Her Witness training evidently did not cause that to appear to her as germane to the issue of loyalty. Dr. Bullock continues:

> At least it hadn't simply been thoughtless gossip. However, that might have been easier for me to deal with than the fact that a trusted employee and friend had done such a thing after full consideration of the damage it would do—to a patient of ours and to me.
>
> Yet I found Linda's story of the public denunciation almost incredible. All the Witnesses I knew seemed so kind. I couldn't believe that their religion called for such talebearing and harsh retribution for backsliders. I telephoned a leading elder of the church, who'd been a friend since high school. He told me it was all true.
>
> He explained that the church elders hadn't tried to weigh the truth of Linda's story of rape. As they saw it, she'd gone somewhere she shouldn't have gone, done something she shouldn't have done, and caught a disease she shouldn't have caught. For that, she had to suffer the punishment of "disfellowship [disfellowshipment]," to be lifted only if she could satisfy the elders of her true repentance. The church had even ordered her to move out of her family home until she met the requirements for absolution.
>
> If I'd been angry when I called, I was furious by the time the elder finished his explanation. I asked him if he realized what his church had done to me, an innocent bystander. He said he was sorry, but, like Toni, he felt the teachings of the church had to come before all other considerations.

Like Toni, he, and the other elders, apparently did not feel any moral obligation to notify the doctor that they had received confidential information from his employee or the use they proposed to make of such legally privileged information. Their Witness training simply did not cause them to think in those terms.

On his attorney's advice Dr. Bullock found it necessary to dismiss Toni. He not only explained to her why this must be done,

but considerately did not let her action cause him to cease friendship toward her. He apologized to Linda, explaining what had happened. She assured him that she would not sue since she recognized that he was not personally at fault.

Dr. Bullock practices in another town now, but says he is still a little "gun-shy." He writes that, since breach of patient confidentiality by an employee is not covered by medical malpractice insurance, "all our expensive professional liability insurance wouldn't be worth a nickel if a patient victimized in this fashion were to sue and win." He now carries a business-owner's policy that includes heavy personal-liability coverage for his employees. Each new employee is told the story of "Toni" and "Linda" and if they cannot assure that their religious beliefs would not oblige them to betray a patient's confidentiality he does not hire them.

As basis for this insistence that Witnesses must inform elders of infractions by fellow members, even in violation of confidentiality, the *Watchtower* earlier referred to cites the Mosaic law provision contained at Leviticus 5:1, which says: "Now in case a soul sins in that he has heard public cursing and he is a witness or he has seen it or has come to know of it, if he does not report it, then he must answer for his error." The article then draws these conclusions:

> This command from the Highest Level of authority in the universe put the responsibility upon each Israelite to report to the judges any serious wrongdoing that he observed so that the matter might be handled. While Christians are not strictly under the Mosaic Law, its principles still apply in the Christian congregation. Hence, there may be times when a Christian is obligated to bring a matter to the attention of the elders. True, it is illegal in many countries to disclose to unauthorized ones what is found in private records. But if a Christian feels, after prayerful consideration, that he is facing a situation where the law of God required him to report what he knew despite the demands of lesser authorities, then that is a responsibility he accepts before Jehovah. There are times when a Christian "must obey God as ruler rather than men." —Acts 5:29.
>
> While oaths or solemn promises should never be taken lightly, there may be times when promises required by men are in conflict with the requirement that we render exclusive devotion to our God. When

> someone commits a serious sin, he, in effect, comes under a 'public curse' from the One wronged, Jehovah God. (Deuteronomy 27:26; Proverbs 3:33) All who become part of the Christian congregation put themselves under "oath" to keep the congregation clean, both by what they do personally and by the way they help others to remain clean.[13]

This certainly lays a heavy burden on the individual Witness and the writer of the article endeavors to convey an equally heavy sense of guilt to any who do not report the sins of fellow Witnesses to the organizationally-appointed elders. Cleanness of the congregation is emphasized as the overriding factor justifying the position taken. But "cleanness" for Witnesses is determined by organizational rulings, whether the Scriptures speak on the matter or are silent, and the procedure for 'helping others to remain clean' is also prescribed by the organization and its procedural rules. This is what makes so ominous the insistence that all members view themselves as under "oath to keep the congregation clean." In its justifying the violating of confidentiality, the *Watchtower* article uses as an illustration the case of an unwed Witness woman submitting to a hospital abortion. However, as has been seen in Chapter 8, with a multitude of organizational rules and regulations, the extent and variety of possible infractions calling for reporting could run into the hundreds. It could mean that a Witness working for an accounting office who saw from invoices that a Witness business owner had put a roof on a church, or installed an alarm system in a church, would view it as mandatory that the matter be reported to the elders. It could mean bringing accusation against a man for having accepted an assignment to work in an old people's home in place of taking military training or for spreading insecticide in a military base, or against a woman for earning money by making beds in a barracks. It can mean feeling that one is "under oath" to report to the elders if a fellow Witness expresses inability to accept the teaching that Christ's kingdom began in 1914 or that he is the mediator for only about 8,600 people today.

While the article states that "Christians are not strictly under the Mosaic Law," one wonders how a stricter application of this particular law could possibly be made to Christians today than that

13 The *Watchtower*, September 1, 1987, page 13.

set forth by the writer of the article. The distinction made between "law" and "principle" becomes a distinction without a difference. The fact is that Christians are not just "*not strictly*" under the Mosaic law—they are not under it *partially* or *otherwise*, but fully under God's gracious kindness.[14] The article does not merely apply the "principle" of this regulation—which might be said to be one's serving the interests of justice and righteousness—but applies the "letter" of the law, in contradiction to the apostolic teaching:

> But now we have been discharged from the Law, because we have died to that by which we were being held fast, that we might be slaves in a new sense by the spirit, and not in the old sense by the written code.[15]
>
> For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.[16]

The *Watchtower* application made is more reflective of the judaizing attitude—with its effort to convert Christians into law-keepers—against which Paul labored so intensively, than it is of the spirit of Christ. The apostle warns that this law-keeping would make Christians subject to the very "curse" that the *Watchtower* article points to in its seeking to induce guilt in any not supporting its policies.[17] To achieve this application, the article actually goes beyond even what was contained in the Mosaic law.

The article first states that what is dealt with at Leviticus 5:1 is a legal case where a wrong has been committed and the one wronged calls on witnesses to give testimony, calling a curse on the one wronging him. In a footnote, it quotes the following, somewhat different, explanation:

> In their *Commentary on the Old Testament*, Keil and Delitzsch state that a person would be guilty of error or sin if he "knew of another's crime, whether he had seen it, or had come to the certain knowledge of it in any other way, and was therefore qualified to appear in court as a witness for the conviction of the criminal, neglected to do so, and did not state what he had seen or learned, when he heard the solemn adjuration [the "curse" referred to] of the judge at the public investigation of the crime, by which all persons present, who knew anything of the matter, were urged to come forward as witnesses."[18]

In Israel, which functioned as a distinct nation, handling not only misdemeanors and criminal cases, but also civil cases involving all manner of controversies between individuals, village or city elders acted as a court, with their consideration of cases held in

14 Romans 6:14; Galatians 5:4, 18.
15 Romans 7:6, *NW*.
16 2 Corinthians 3:6, *NRSV*.
17 Acts 15:5; Galatians 3:1-5, 10-13. The article even includes a reference to Deuteronomy 27:26 which states: "Cursed is the one who will not put the words of this law in force by doing them."
18 The *Watchtower*, September 1, 1987, page 13.

public at the city gate.[19] If there was any calling for witnesses to give testimony in a particular case, it was done in a public way, and the call might be accompanied by a "solemn adjuration," or, as the *New World Translation* puts it, a "public cursing," placing witnesses under responsibility to testify and to testify forthrightly.[20]

One of the more detailed examples of a hearing before city elders is found at Ruth 4:1-12. It deals with Boaz, a near relative of the deceased Elimelech, and interested in acting as "repurchaser" of the dead man's estate—the effecting of which would carry with it the obligation to marry Ruth the Moabitess. Boaz goes to the city gate, waits till another man who is the nearest relative (and who thus has first right as "repurchaser") comes along. Boaz then gets together ten of the elders of the city and the matter is settled before them and the gathered crowd, with Boaz gaining the right he sought. He calls on all, elders and gathered people, saying, "You are witnesses today."

There is not the remotest correspondence between the very open way matters were conducted then and the secretive way in which the religious court system instituted by the Watch Tower organization operates. Public calls for witnesses are virtually unheard of, judicial hearings are carried on in secret, and about the only thing ever expressed publicly is a brief announcement of disfellowshipment or disassociation. Why does the organization make a very selective application of the "principle" of the law, using it only to place a burden of responsibility on its members to report on infractions of fellow members, while ignoring the clear principle of openness in the conduct of judicial proceedings by its organizationally-appointed representatives?[21]

The writer of the *Watchtower* article thus quickly seeks to convert the matter from the *responding to a public call* for witnesses, to that of an individual's *initiating a report* of wrongdoing to elders. The material relegates those not elders to the role of informers or accusers, and reserves to the elders any exercise of personal judgment as to what course the situation calls for. While members are supposed to approach the supposed wrongdoer first and urge his or her going to the elders, the fact is that this is rarely done. In the vast majority of cases that step is bypassed, a report is made to the elders, and, as the saying goes, this usually means that "the fat is in the fire" and the organization's judicial procedures begin to function.

19 Deuteronomy 16:18; 21:19; Ruth 4:1.
20 Compare Proverbs 29:24; Matthew 26:62, 63.
21 Its own 1988 publication *Insight on Scriptures* states that "the publicity that would be afforded any trial at the gate would tend to influence the judges toward care and justice in the trial proceedings and in their decisions." (Vol. I, page 518)

The whole intent of the *Watchtower* material evidently is to take from Witness members any personal choice in the matter, any right to exercise personal judgment as regards making the wrong actions of another a matter subject to judicial inquiry. It seeks to rule out an individual's allowing compassion or any similar concern to determine whether he or she will keep such a matter confidential or not, as well as to portray as disrespectful to God any personal effort at helping the wrongdoer without making a report to the organization's appointed elders.

There is no question that under the Mosaic law there was an implicit responsibility to speak up about certain grave wrongs and crimes of an extreme nature—blasphemy against God, the attempt to seduce fellow Israelites to idolatry, the shedding of innocent human blood, perhaps also the uttering of false and deceptive prophecies.[22] But nowhere in the Mosaic law do we find it stated in such broad terms that every Israelite was duty bound to report to the judges "any serious wrongdoing that he observed." As we have seen, in most cases, the regulations, including that at Leviticus 5:1, deal with *responding to a summons* or an *adjuration* to testify, not an Israelite's *initiating* some report. The idea that God's law imposed on each Israelite the obligation to go to the city elders about each and every wrong of any significance that a fellow Israelite might commit—with a consequent airing of the matter publicly at the city gate—is something the *Watchtower* writer has read into the Scriptures. Obviously, any individual who was himself aggrieved, having been wronged by another, had the right to go to the elders at the gates and bring accusation. Even here, however, if individuals could work matters out privately there was no obligation resting on the aggrieved one to report the wrongdoing of the other.

A notable example of remaining silent in the face of apparently convincing evidence of serious wrong is found in the case of Joseph, Jesus' foster father. He genuinely believed that the woman betrothed to him had violated the law concerning adultery. The undeniable fact of her pregnancy before entering the marriage state appeared to give absolute proof of this. Yet Joseph did not feel under obligation to report her to elders or priests as judges. Not wanting to "expose her to public disgrace," he intended to divorce her quietly. Was he thereby disdaining a divine "oath" commanding him to report and displaying a gross lack of concern for the "cleanness of the congregation"? The Scriptures tell us he was so

22 Leviticus 24:10-14; Deuteronomy 13:6-11; 17:2-7; 21:1-9; Zechariah 13:2-6. Generally, those knowing of such crimes were to be, not only witnesses, but the first in casting stones to execute such ones.

motivated because he was "a righteous man [a good man, *PME*; a man of honor, *JB*]".[23] In relieving Joseph of his misapprehension and assuring him of Mary's chastity, God did not rebuke him for his compassionate intent.[24]

God's Son likewise made clear that not all wrongs needed to be brought before judges, speaking of circumstances where a wrongdoer might avoid this by coming to terms with his accuser even while the accuser was on his way to level the charge before the judge.[25] He correspondingly called on those who had been sinned against to take the initiative, not to report the matter to a judicial body, but to approach the one who had sinned and endeavor to get him to recognize the wrong, saying that, if successful, "you have won back your brother"—this without any intervention by others, including elders. Only if unsuccessful would he seek help from "one or two others" and nothing is said of these being "elders." If this further effort failed, then only would the sinful act of the wrongdoer be brought before the congregation.[26]

Jesus forcefully exposed the wrongness of the rigidity typifying a legalistic approach to service of God. Showing that the purpose of the law was to *benefit* man, not to be a wearisome burden, nor to fetter him in showing compassion, he told accusers that "the sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath."[27] He recalled to religious legalists the account about David's entering the tabernacle and receiving loaves of the sacred "bread of the Presence" to feed his men, bread "which it was *not lawful* for him or his companions to eat, but only for the priests."[28] He neither portrayed David as 'coming under God's curse' for doing this, nor portrayed the priest on that occasion as remiss in fulfilling an "oath" to keep the congregation clean because of not bringing an accusation against David. He likewise did not commend the action of Doeg the Edomite who *did* promptly report the matter to the head of the nation, Saul, leading to a death sentence for 85 priests and the slaughter of the people in their city.[29] Instead, Jesus used the account as basis for saying to the religious elders, "If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent."[30]

23 Matthew 1:19.
24 Matthew 1:20-24.
25 Matthew 6:23-25.
26 Matthew 18:15-18, *JB*.
27 Mark 2:27, *JB*.
28 1 Samuel 21:1-6; Matthew 12:1-4, *NRSV*.
29 1 Samuel 21:7; 22:9-19.
30 Matthew 12:7, *NIV*.

As Christians, "discharged from the law" and no longer slaves "in the old sense by the written code," we are free to be guided by Christ's example and by the law of faith and the royal law of love in making decisions in this area.[31] We have the apostolic assurance that "he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law," and that not only commandments about adultery, murder, stealing, coveting, but "*whatever other commandment there may be*, are summed up in this one rule: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."[32] We are free to use our judgment as to what course seems to give promise of bringing the greatest good—for wrongdoers and for others who may be affected. Certainly there are matters in life of such grave import—either representing a grossness and severity of injury committed, or indicating a *potential* for serious harm—that, aware of them, we will feel moved to make them known to others. But we are not bound by inflexible rules, placing us under "oath" and making it automatically mandatory that we expose the trespasses of others. We are encouraged to 'confess our sins *to one another*,' not to an ecclesiastical court; *each* of us, not just men holding an organizational appointment, are exhorted to do whatever we can to help and heal those who have strayed from truth and fallen into error, doing so with a merciful attitude toward the individual, even though detesting the wrongs themselves.[33]

The rigid policy advanced in the final analysis actually works against helping persons who slip into error. One committing a serious sin may feel keenly the need for help to avoid further wrong. But a Witness cannot go even to a friend in his congregation to discuss a sinful error with any degree of assurance that what he or she says to the friend will be kept confidential. Texts speaking against the 'uncovering of confidential talk' are not viewed as having force in this case, and the statement that "a true companion is loving all the time, and is a brother that is born for when there is distress" likewise becomes inoperative, empty of meaning.[34] Even though the one who has sinned has gone to God in prayer through Christ and sought forgiveness, this is not enough to warrant confidentiality. If the sin is anything the organization classifies as a "major sin" its officials must be informed and the ecclesiastical court must decide whether action needs to be taken or not.

31 Romans 7:6.
32 Romans 13:8-10, *NIV*.
33 James 5:16, 19, 20; Jude 22, 23.
34 See Proverbs 11:13; 25:9; 17:17.

Witnesses are made to feel that they are not showing love if they fail to report fellow members who have not 'gone to the authorities' about their personal wrongs. Erring Witnesses are told that they can speak to the elders, "confident that they will handle the problem in a kind and understanding way."[35] While on the Governing Body, quite a different picture from that portrayed came through in expressions from the headquarters Service Department. They quoted traveling overseers as saying they believed that by far the majority (some gave figures of 70% or more) of the elders were not qualified to serve in a judicial capacity. I am sure there are some elders who merit the confidence described in Watch Tower publications. But actual experience shows that adherence to organizational policy is paramount with the great majority of such men and that legalism all too often stymies the natural feelings of compassion they might otherwise have.

Illustrative of the way the private actions of Witnesses are closely monitored by "loyal" elders, men impelled to enforce the organization's "great body of Theocratic law," is the case in Sweden of Rud Persson and his wife. Rud was baptized as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in 1959. In January of 1986, he and his wife thought more seriously on the message of Christ Jesus in the parable of the "good Samaritan" than they had done in the past. Moved especially by the hunger situation in Ethiopia, they paid a small annual membership fee to the Red Cross so as to obtain information about various emergency projects, among which they might choose to contribute some modest help. Rud expected no problem on this. His own mother, a staunch Witness, had benefited from Swedish Red Cross invalid service after becoming permanently ill.

A few months later, in May of that year, the presiding overseer of the local congregation approached Rud and inquired if he had joined the Red Cross. Rud expected a friendly conversation, but on his confirming that he had taken membership, the overseer dropped the subject and made no further inquiry.

Only later did Rud find that an "investigation" had already begun before this conversation. One elder, having heard a rumor that Rud had taken membership in the Red Cross, reported the matter to the body of elders, the elders had discussed the matter and had even contacted the circuit overseer of their area, Gert Andersson, for his advice. Why? It was felt that Rud might have "broken his neutrality" as regards war (as we have seen, often expressed as having "violated Isaiah 2:4"). The elders, on June 19, 1986, wrote to

35 Quoted from the caption accompanying the picture on page 15 of the *Watchtower*, September 1, 1987.

the Watch Tower's Swedish branch office, inquiring as to the advisability of calling Rud before a judicial committee to see if he had violated his Christian neutrality. The branch office replied, sending a copy of their letter to circuit overseer Andersson, saying they would research the matter and possibly obtain advice from the Governing Body in Brooklyn. Finally, on October 15, 1986, they sent the letter here shown to the presiding overseer of the congregation, Mats Nordsund.[36]

During all this time, from the occasion in May when the overseer's brief inquiry was made as to whether Rud had joined the Red Cross, until now in October, nothing had been said to him about this investigation. Rud's father and younger brother were on the body of elders but said nothing to him, doubtless feeling that "confidentiality" did not permit his being made aware that he might face a judicial hearing. However, when they received the branch office letter of October 15, the elders, having consulted the circuit overseer again, acted rapidly. On October 18, the presiding overseer phoned Rud, informing him that the Society wanted him to answer five questions in the presence of two elders; he also asked if Rud's wife had become a Red Cross member.

BIBEL-OCH TRAKTATSÄLLSKAPET VAKTTORNET
Box 5, S-732 00 ARBOGA, SWEDEN SR:SL 1986-10-15

Mats Nordsund
Brohuset 1019
Prästmöllan
260 70 LJUNGBYHED

To the body of elders in the Perstorp Congregation

Dear Brothers,

We now write to you concerning the information you provided the Society that brother Rud Persson has become a member of the Red Cross.

We forwarded the issue to the brothers in Brooklyn to get their view on membership of such an organization. The brothers advised us that even if the Red Cross in a certain country carries out the service that may be needed locally, it still applies the principles of the International Red Cross with headquarters in Switzerland. It is claimed that the purpose of the organization is to relieve human hardship and suffering, but we must, nevertheless, remember that the organization had its beginning on the battlefields. It performs a large part of its work directly or indirectly in conflict with the thoughts outlined at Isaiah 2:4. Too, the organization is one of the world's biggest suppliers of blood for transfusions. It is also involved in political matters and often acts as mediator between nations at war.

36 This letter was written in Swedish. What appears here is a translation. A copy of the Swedish original is on file with Commentary Press.

Consequently, it is good to consider what an organization as a whole works for and put that in relation to the Christian neutrality that God's people must show. And we cannot support misuse of blood either. To be sure, it is all very well to try to relieve human suffering, but we don't need to become members of a worldly organization to do so, do we? This was treated rather extensively in The Watchtower, October 1, 1986, pp. 22-24.

A person's motive for joining an organization also comes into the picture. Why does he wish to join a certain organization? Does he approve of what the organization stands for? It may happen that someone becomes a passive member of such an organization in order to qualify for a course in first aid. Nothing else is required of the individual. A Christian might think that his conscience allows for this. On the other hand, if someone says that he is defending everything the organization advocates, then, of course, his privileges in the congregation would be affected. If someone should become a member and actively support, for example, the worldwide blood program the Red Cross stands for, that could lead to disfellowshipping.

Hence, in your case we recommend that you talk to brother Rud Persson about this and examine his motive for joining the Red Cross. Is he of the opinion that what this organization stands for is good and proper? Is he aware of its program in support of blood transfusions? And its activities as mediator between nations? When you have talked extensively with him about this and heard his reaction, please communicate with us again so that we can visualize his thinking in this matter and if he wants to continue his membership of the Red Cross. What is his attitude to food containing blood served at school? Has he informed the teachers about our position regarding this? Birthday celebrations and so forth in connection with school activities? We mention this because brother Gert Andersson at one time made comments about this concerning the children of brother Rud Persson.

United with you in publishing the good news of the kingdom we send our love and greetings.

Your brothers

BIBEL-OCH TRAKTATSÄLLSKAPET VAKTTORNET

(stamp)

Encl. extract from The World Book Encyclopedia

cc: Gert Andersson

At the meeting, Rud was called on to answer these five questions:

1) What is your motive for joining the Red Cross?

2) Are you of the opinion that what the Red Cross stands for is good and proper?

3) Are you aware of the program of the Red Cross for blood transfusions?

4) Are you aware that the Red Cross is involved in mediation between the nations?

5) Do you intend to continue your membership of the Red Cross?

His replies, in essence, were these:

1) His motive was to be informed of help projects of the Red Cross and to make appropriate contributions. He referred the elders to an article in the December 8, 1976, *Awake!*, which, while presenting many negative factors about charitable organizations, stated that it was not necessarily wrong to contribute to them. He also said he found the matter analogous to the organization's stand regarding labor unions and certain types of employment, where negative factors were viewed as balanced out by positive ones.[37]

2) His answer to the second question was that he sympathized with the impartial help the Red Cross gave to the needy, felt it was good and proper. He then called the elders' attention to this statement in the June 1, 1918, issue of the *Watch Tower*:

> "A Christian to whom may have been presented the perverted viewpoint that the Red Cross work is only the aiding of that killing which is against his conscience, cannot help the Red Cross; then he gains the broader viewpoint that the Red Cross is the embodiment of helping the helpless, and he finds himself able and willing to help the Red Cross according to ability and opportunity."

He added that he felt this change from a "perverted viewpoint" to a "broader viewpoint" was even more justified today.

3) As regards blood transfusions, he pointed out that in most cases the actual transfusions are made by hospitals, and that he felt it unlikely that the Society would boycott hospitals because of their large use of blood. Many Witnesses worked at hospitals having "blood programs." He reminded the elders of the Society's ruling that a Witness doctor might administer a blood transfusion to a non-Witness patient requesting one, without being subjected to judicial action![38]

4) As for alleged mediation between nations, he stated that the Red Cross was not political, its role as mediator being restricted solely to humanitarian matters. He again used the analogy of labor unions, "worldly" organizations to which thousands of Witnesses belong. In contrast with the Red Cross, unions are often engaged in political activity, yet membership is not condemned by the Society.

37 See the *Watchtower*, February 15, 1961, page 128; *Awake!* December 8, 1976, pages 27, 28; the *Watchtower*, July 15, 1982, page 26.
38 See the *Watchtower*, November 15, 1964, pages 682, 683.

> 5) As to whether he intended to remain a member of the Red Cross, he stated that from what he could see this was in harmony with the Society's publications. He said the question had no meaning unless it were first shown that such membership was incompatible with Christianity. Having received no information to that effect, he saw no conflict of interest.

It is worth noting the source of the questions Rud Persson faced. They were supplied to the local elders by the Swedish branch office of the Watch Tower Society, and the branch office members stated that they had received direction on the matter from the Governing Body in Brooklyn. It must be assumed that the information the branch office supplied in its letter to the elders drew upon that Governing Body direction. It is also worth noting that their information was guilty of numerous misrepresentations, shallow reasoning.

The elders transmitted Rud's replies to the branch office along with a report containing adverse allegations about him, even extending to the school conditions of his children. They did not supply him with a copy but he was able to obtain one and sent a detailed refutation of each of their allegations to the branch office.

Months passed with no word from the branch office. Finally, on April 8, 1987, Rud phoned the branch office and spoke to two members of the Branch Office Committee, Ake Carlsson and Rune Grahn. Carlsson laughingly stated that 'the organization could not tell the friends what to do regarding a matter like this.' (Compare the clear difference between that disclaimer and what the letter which the branch office had sent to the congregation elders actually said.) Rune Grahn said no action would be taken against Rud, that the Brooklyn headquarters had indicated that membership in the Red Cross might only have consequences as to a man's holding the office of elder or ministerial servant in the congregation. He likened it to the matter of growing a beard.[39]

After waiting yet another month for some expression from his local body of elders, Rud informed his brother, an elder, of his conversation with the men at the branch office. He found that the local elders had never received any reply to their letter to the branch office. To their credit, a few expressed relief on learning what the branch office men had said. Rud personally found it unbelievable that a professedly Christian organization could resort to these tactics, subjecting persons to such scrutiny and interrogation simply because they felt moved by what they read in Luke 10:29-37 to engage in humanitarian activity.

39 The general policy has been that no action is to be taken where a Witness man grows a beard, but that the elders may decide he does not qualify for organizational responsibility.

I am inclined to believe that not many Witnesses would have felt equipped to present as able a response as was given by this man in Sweden. Had they not, they might well have found themselves facing disfellowshiping action, as having "violated their neutrality," based on the organization's completely false claim that the Red Cross "performs a large part of its work directly or indirectly in conflict with the thoughts outlined at Isaiah 2:4."

In the "Cradle of Democracy"

Perhaps nothing illustrates more clearly the extremes to which the zeal to spy out and deal summarily with any disagreement or disaffection can go than what happened in Athens, Greece, the land called "the cradle of democracy."

In 1986, the branch office of the Watch Tower Society, located in the Athens area, began applying intense pressure on Witnesses who gave any indication of not being in total agreement with organizational teachings and policies. The number of those disfellowshiped evidently reached more than a hundred. In an interest to maintain spirituality, these persons began gathering together for Bible reading and discussion in private homes. The Greek branch office, however, manifested an extreme concern to seek out and take action against any doing so. This in time introduced some remarkable measures and led to a court case described in the Athens newspaper shown on the following page.

On Tuesday, April 6, 1987, a group of about 50 persons gathered at the home of Nick and Eftihia Bozartzis for Bible discussion. From his balcony Nick noticed two men standing across the street watching the individuals entering his home, some of whom had not formally withdrawn from the organization. Recognizing one of the two observers as a Witness, he went down to speak to them, but as soon as he appeared on the street level they literally ran off. Within days, three of those attending the gathering were disfellowshiped by elders in judicial hearings.

On Friday, others normally went to the home of Voula Kalokerinou, a former Witness, but since they planned to gather for the celebration of the Lord's evening meal on Sunday, their gathering on Friday, April 9, was canceled. That Friday evening, however, Voula noticed a car with five persons inside parked across the road from her house, and the car and its occupants remained there for hours. The next evening the same.

Η ΝΕΑ ΤΕΧΝΟΛΟΓΙΑ ΣΤΗΝ ΥΠΗΡΕΣΙΑ ΤΟΥ «ΑΡΜΑΓΕΔΔΩΝΑ»

Μάρτυρες του βίντεο

- ΠΙΣΤΟΙ ΤΟΥ ΙΕΧΩΒΑ, ΠΟΥ ΕΦΥΓΑΝ ΑΠΟ ΤΗΝ ΟΡΓΑΝΩΣΗ, ΤΡΕΜΟΥΝ ΤΙΣ ΚΑΣΕΤΕΣ
- «ΔΕΝ ΜΠΟΡΟΥΜΕ ΝΑ ΜΙΛΗΣΟΥΜΕ ΟΥΤΕ ΣΤΑ ΠΑΙΔΙΑ ΜΑΣ»
- «ΠΟΛΛΟΙ ΧΑΝΟΥΝ ΤΗ ΔΟΥΛΕΙΑ ΤΟΥΣ ΜΕ ΤΟ ΗΛΕΚΤΡΟΝΙΚΟ ΦΑΚΕΛΩΜΑ»

The headline reads: "Witnesses of Video," followed by the statements, "Faithful of Jehovah, who left the organization, in fear of casettes," "'We can't even talk to our own children,'" "'Many are losing their jobs due to the electronic filing.'"

One might think that to assign any sinister motive to such circumstances, viewing them as evidence of "spying" designed to identify "defectors" and supply grounds for judicial action against them, would be the product of imagination, even manifest a degree of paranoia. Later events demonstrated otherwise.

The following Sunday, April 11, a number of persons went to Voula's home to commemorate the death of God's Son on behalf of all mankind. She noticed an unfamiliar car parked across the road on one corner and a van parked on the other corner. The rear window of the van was covered over with paper but with a hole cut in the center of the covering material. The occupants of the car crossed over to the van several times, talking with those inside it. Voula asked one of those who had come to her home to find out why the cars were parked there. When he approached the car, those inside quickly drove off. He then went to the rear of the van and looked in through the hole of the material covering the rear window. Inside he saw video camera equipment being used by two Witnesses, an elder named Nikolas Antoniou, and a member of the Athens Watch Tower branch office staff, Dimetre Zerdes. A number of others from Voula's home came over to the van and a policeman stationed at the nearby Italian Embassy also appeared to

find out what the problem was. The Witnesses in the van managed to drive through the surrounding group and drove to a nearby park where they began quickly unloading their video equipment. They were interrupted by the arrival of two police cars and were arrested on charges of invasion of privacy. The video equipment was confiscated. The film in it showed Mrs. Kalokerinou's home and zoom shots of the front entrance with closeups of all those entering.

Before the district attorney, the two men stated that they were only there to film a relative of Dimetre Zerdes, the Watch Tower branch office member. His cousin, Eftihia Bozartzis, mentioned earlier, had disassociated herself two years before. As a "loyal" Witness, branch office member Dimitre should have had no interest in her, certainly should not have had any reason for wanting to film her secretively two years after her disassociation.

The case eventually came to trial. In his presentation at the close of the trial, the district attorney, Mr. Kontaxis, stated:

> I don't think there is any Christian organization that tells its members to tell lies, but when the defendant and his organization does so, I would want them to accept the responsibility and say, "Yes, we did spy." And if an organization did such a thing then how can it expect others to follow it? They had and used special equipment with witnesses seeing them filming, and yet the defendant comes along and says he didn't do it to spy but just to film. All this doesn't honor either the defendant or the organization to which he belongs.
>
> We are all free to belong to any organization we want, but we are also free to leave that organization and do whatever we want within the bounds of the law. . . . Does a person's leaving, abandoning this organization give it the right to follow and spy on its members? One is protected by law against cassettes, tape recorders, filming, when such are used to pry into one's personal life and personality. This comes under CONFIDENTIALITY and is protected by it in such cases, and that includes one's private convictions. This is very serious. Obviously the defendants were trying to cryptograph the private life of the plaintiffs by using video equipment, and this purposely, not by chance.
>
> The Watch Tower Society, by teaching it is the "ark," and that one must enter it to be saved, by teaching it is God's channel, creates tremendous dependency on its members and thus [they] are directed to do everything to threaten and trample all that we call human rights.

In the course of the trial, one of the judges asked the Witness elder, the owner of the van, how long he and the other Witness had been stationed in the van that day. The answer was, six hours. When asked if the windows of the van were clear, the elder said, No, that the back window was covered with paper with a hole in the center through which they had done filming with the video cassette camera. He claimed that all this was solely to film his companion's relative. The confiscated film showed zoom shots of many persons at the house's front entrance and on its balcony. But

the relative did not appear anywhere on the film. Actually she could not have appeared—for the simple reason that she was never at the gathering! The court rendered a guilty verdict in the case.

Ironically, the following year, the *Awake!* magazine carried an article decrying the intolerance of Greek Orthodox Church officials, expressed in pressuring officials of a sports stadium to cancel their contract with Jehovah's Witnesses, who were to hold an assembly in the stadium.[40] The article rightly condemned this unjust treatment of "peaceful and law-abiding Christians," pointing to the Greek constitutional guarantees of freedom of worship and religious conscience, and citing a court ruling that "the freedom of expressing one's religious beliefs is more especially safeguarded by . . . the Treaty of Rome dated April 11, 1950, 'on the protection of human rights.'" After saying that "the freedom of the Greek people once again has been trampled on because of the Dark Ages mentality of the clergy," the article added, "How sad to see such a flouting of democracy in 'the cradle of democracy.'"

I can agree with this condemnation of "extreme intolerance and bigotry" and I think it is sad that the Witnesses experienced this injustice. What I find equally sad, however, is an organization's ability to see injustice when committed by others, to protest against it when practiced toward its own membership in violation of their exercise of freedom of conscience, and yet not be able to see when it itself is guilty of the same thing. The Watch Tower organization has never spoken out against the Dark Ages mentality its own representatives manifested in "the cradle of democracy" by secretive and illegal spying on peaceful and law-abiding Christians who were gathering for the sole purpose of commemorating the death of God's Son. The presence of a branch office staff member in the van used for spying clearly indicates that the branch administration was aware of what was being done and approved or at the very least condoned that action. But the organization does not inform Witnesses of this, publishes no expression of condemnation of such practices and, while Witnesses worldwide read of the acts of the Greek Orthodox clergy, none of them outside of Greece would know of the action of Watch Tower representatives in that country.

To this day, in all countries, any persons among Jehovah's Witnesses who find they cannot conscientiously support fully the organization's teachings or practices live in a climate of fear, feeling they must constantly be on guard as to what they say, what they

40 See *Awake!*, November 22, 1988, pages 9-11.

do, what they read, with whom they associate, from whom they receive letters, not feeling any sense of freedom even when among personal friends or close relatives if these are also Witnesses. As stated, in my personal experience I have had people phone who were afraid to give their name or who felt it necessary to use a fictitious name, some who even felt it necessary to take out a special post office box to be able to correspond without danger of their correspondence with me or other former Witnesses being discovered. They face a form of "hostage" situation, produced by the organization's power to cut off all their future communication with family and friends who are subject to the organization's authority. The only way to avoid this is to meet the terms the organization lays down.

The picture presented is not overdrawn. The experiences related here are only a small fraction of all that could be given, for an entire book could be filled with them. They exemplify the thinking produced, the attitude developed, by an organization that is willing to use what amounts to "thought control" to maintain a "sterile" atmosphere within its membership. Strongly based, solid teachings do not need such a sterile atmosphere—where open discussion is decried as heretical, treasonous—in order to survive. Truth has the strength to confront error. Its validity and worth are in the end enhanced by such confrontations. It is only fragile, weakly supported teachings that are so lacking in powers of resistance that their ability to survive demands being protected from having to endure a testing of their strength.

The harsh reality of the situation strikingly reveals the hollowness of public relations statements of the organization, whose representatives, when interviewed by the news media, express difficulty in understanding 'why anyone would be concerned about reprisals,' 'why it is that persons who cannot agree do not simply leave quietly,' who insist that there is no "badgering," no "emotional harassment," in this "very open organization," which is free from "spiritual policemen." There are hundreds, thousands of persons who know how contrary to fact those statements are. They know that to express any disagreement, no matter how respectfully made, or to engage in any discussion of a viewpoint that differs with any of the organization's teachings, even in private conversation among close friends, is to invite investigation and trial by a judicial committee. They know that it is almost impossible to withdraw quietly, that the view is, in effect, "you cannot quit, we must fire you." Why? Because by so doing the person who has conscientious concerns about the organization's course and teachings is

then placed "off limits" to all other members. There is no danger of these members conversing with such ones and beginning to think about matters that the organization declares to be unthinkable.

Unlike the shepherd who would leave the ninety-nine to help one strayed sheep, a shepherd who would patiently and gently treat and nurse a sick sheep, the efforts Witness elders make in these situations are often in the form of a confrontation. If scriptures are used at all, it is generally in an accusatory way, not in a healing way. "Do you or do you not accept the organization as God's one channel?" is virtually always the principal question put, the prime issue on which the results of an interrogation hinge, the criterion by which one's Christianity is judged. The strange situation that results is as if shepherds were to say to a flock:

> If any of you sheep do not like the way we feed and shepherd you, you are perfectly free to leave. Any who want to go, however, should come to us so that we can first brand you as rejected and spray you with a substance having the odor of wolves, so that the rest of the flock can identify you and avoid you. And please have the decency to leave quietly without any bleating.

"Lawlessness" of a Different Kind

God's Word serves to expose what might otherwise remain concealed. It reveals the wrongness of those who, like the Pharisees, seemed pure and holy, guiltless according to law, but who merited the strongest denunciations by God's Son for their unkind, unfeeling, superior way. He said that they were like whitewashed tombs. The tombs might look handsome from the outside, but inside all they contained were dead men's bones and uncleanness. The Pharisees' righteousness was superficial; it made them look well to others, but covered over hypocrisy and lawlessness.[41] Stressing that outward appearance and conformity to law prove little as to genuine righteousness, Jesus Christ showed how much deeper the matter goes than what appears on the surface. He warned that adultery can be committed without even touching a woman, through lust in one's heart. His disciple John made plain that one can be a murderer though never having shed anyone's blood, because of murderous hatred in the heart. The apostle Paul stated that one can be an idolater, though having no literal images for worship, because of being covetous and greedy at heart.[42]

41 Matthew 23:27, 28.
42 Matthew 5:27, 28; 1 John 3:15; Colossians 3:5.

It seems that Paul had these principles in mind when he wrote these words at Romans 2:17-24:

> Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."—*New International Version*.

I am grateful in a sense for what I have experienced within the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, and what I experienced within its Governing Body. I doubt that I would have fully appreciated the value and importance of the Bible teachings in all these regards had it not been for seeing in such a personal way the effect of a legalistic approach to Christianity. I would never have realized how a surface morality can be produced that nonetheless allows for acts that are not only unmerciful but sometimes cruel, extremely so. Now, however, I can realize how it is that the apostle's words just quoted can apply equally today. I can understand how it is that an organization can claim to be "spiritual Israel," formed of "Jews" in the figurative sense, can proclaim worldwide that it and it alone stands in God's favor, knows His will and law, is His appointed guide to lead people out of darkness into the light of truth, an organization that draws great attention to its making known the name of Jehovah throughout the earth—how it is that such an organization can nonetheless be guilty of a form of lawlessness so serious that it brings grave dishonor on the very name it claims to honor.

The problem is *not* that there is *theft of material objects*. But things of far greater value are stolen. The fact is that men and women who genuinely love God and his Son and his Word and who have conscientiously dissented from certain organizational law or teachings have been *robbed of their proper influence* among friends and acquaintances, *stripped of their good name and reputation, cheated of the affection and respect* that they earned honestly by a whole lifetime of conscientious service to God and to fellow man, have even seen *their own families torn away* from them. Yet all this has been justified by organizational "law."[43]

43 In one communication from Canada, George Beech, a Witness for 20 years but now cut off from his children and grandchildren, said his attitude toward the organization was, "You can steal my house, steal my money—but don't steal my mind, my wife, my children."

There has been *no bloodshed*, *no literal murder*. Yet sincere and inoffensive men and women who simply sought to hold to conscience have, in effect, been '*stabbed in the back*' by unjustified, even malicious, accusations, have undergone *character assassination*, leaving them as though *spiritually dead* in the eyes of most of those who knew them.

To use the threat of organizational disfellowshipment, with all its consequences, to intimidate people into conforming to a particular policy when their conscience dictates otherwise, or to pressure them to profess belief in a teaching that they honestly believe is contrary to Scripture, is a form of *spiritual extortion*, *spiritual blackmail*. To interpose a religious authority center between people and Christ Jesus as a divine "channel" is to *defraud* those persons of a spiritual inheritance, an intimate, very personal, relationship with God and his Son that should be rightfully theirs.

These things may not be as easy to identify and expose as literal theft, murder or material fraud and extortion Yet they are equally, in some cases perhaps even more, immoral. They constitute lawlessness of a kind that gravely dishonors the name of God.

A Regrettable Misdirection of Zeal

Among Jehovah's Witnesses there are hundreds, thousands of persons who need, and would greatly benefit from, upbuilding, healthful aid, aid that would contribute toward their developing the strength and understanding to meet personal problems that seriously affect their lives. As will be discussed in a later chapter, while there is much boasting of the "spiritual paradise" supposedly found within the international organization, a survey of most congregations would reveal that Witnesses as a collective society are in no way free from the social stress and problems affecting people in general. The large files at the Watch Tower's Brooklyn headquarters contain abundant evidence of this, and their volume grows with each passing year.

Much is made of the policy of disfellowshiping "unrepentant wrongdoers" as proof of concern for 'maintaining a clean organization.' Simply to amputate offending members of a body, however, is no sign of overall health and certainly no proof of curative powers.

There are definitely elders among the Witness community who feel moved to give personal attention and remedial help that might avoid any call for punitive action, or to give simply the kind of Christian encouragement and comfort that so many need. There are elders who feel that they can rightly take the time for doing so, and

who are equipped spiritually and Scripturally to supply such help. The truly regrettable fact is that such elders are so rare. The system itself, its view of itself, and the spirit that results, simply do not favor this kind of person. The criteria for selecting elders gives virtually no consideration to the desirable qualities described, focusing largely on how "active" candidates are—not in giving kind help to others—but in the organization's programs. As a result, most elders are or have become merely "organization men," concerned only with following the organization line, with much prodding of the sheep to follow that line, but with only perfunctory help and very little in the way of comfort or refreshment. Their role has been converted by a religious system from that of spiritual shepherds to spiritual taskmasters. The failure to recognize the Scriptural truths that Christian salvation is not predicated on some program of works, that Christian deeds must be spontaneously motivated by faith and love and not by external pressures, and that Christians are not under law but under God's undeserved kindness—it is this failure that lies at the root of the problem.

I do not question the sincerity of many of these men. Actually, a growing number of Witness elders have been moved by conscience to resign their eldership. The evidence is that the organization is losing many of its more compassionate men, and the long-term effects of this will not be healthful. In many congregations, more and more comparatively young men are becoming elders and often the resulting situation proves like that in Biblical times, when King Rehoboam received wise counsel for moderation from older men but preferred to go with that of younger men who favored a tough, authoritarian stance.[44]

Similarly, as regards many of those congregation members who, because of holding to organizational norms, have coldly cut off former friends and even family members from fellowship, doing this even where they knew that the only "sin" of such ones was their inability to accept conscientiously certain teachings or practices as scriptural, I am sure that many do this with deep pain. Here, too, there are those who eventually begin to ask themselves if their course is really exemplary of the attitude of God's Son.

In 1985 a couple in Maine, who had left "hippie" life to become Witnesses wrote of their being attracted to the organization because of its apparent warmth and openness. They "auxiliary pioneered" frequently, gave their "100%" in all respects, so that, as their letter states, "we soon realized our home was nothing more than a motel

44 1 Kings 12:3-16.

room, a place to rush to after the long drive home from meetings, and a place to grab a bite in before rushing off to drop the kids at school and go out in service." Yet none of this disturbed them. What *did* were experiences of a different kind. As the wife writes:

> The first was a situation out in service: a sister Witness and I visited a dying Witness in the hospital. A well-dressed younger man happened to be there to visit also, so we spoke with him. It turned out that he was the man's son and a former Witness. In our brief (needless to say) conversation with him, he mentioned that he'd simply had some questions that he wanted answered, and that after several sessions, trying to get answers, had been disfellowshiped. (This was in 1981.)
>
> What amazes me now, looking back, is that all the sister and I were really concerned about was that we stopped speaking to him very quickly, as we were "s'posed to." I didn't even think of how he must have felt about his dying father.

Her husband, Kim, found himself forced to reassess his views by an experience with a Polish Witness who had been in concentration camps during World War II. She asked him if she could speak to him after one congregational meeting. The letter relates:

> She began crying soon after we started talking. She rode to work every morning with her disfellowshiped son, and with all the "new understanding" [the Society's 1981 more rigid policy toward disfellowshiped persons], she was having a wretched time with her relationship with him. Another son was an elder in our congregation and took a hard line, and yet another son was dying of cancer. The thought of rejecting the disfellowshiped son was just more than she could bear.
>
> My husband [Kim] later commented that if an organization were really teaching the love that Christ taught us we should have, an occasion like that would never have arisen, because there was no compassion in it.

Once a judicial hearing produces a verdict for disfellowshiping, the organizational policy in effect calls on all Witnesses—even though having no knowledge of what was said in the secret hearing—to participate in a figurative "stoning" of the one condemned, treating him as though dead as long as he is in the disfellowshiped "state." I would think that any person having genuine respect for the heavenly Judge and his Son, before whose judgment seat we must all eventually appear, would think seriously about their individual responsibility when called on to cast their personal "stone," particularly if they have any question in their hearts as to the condemned one's being truly a "wicked" person.

Having been through the experience of such "stoning" myself, I believe I can understand how many feel. And yet, I believe that our own respect for our superior Judges, God and Christ, as well as our own compassion and humility, can temper whatever sense of resentment we might feel. It may well cause us to take up the words of God's Son and of his disciple Stephen and say with them, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."[45] It is not that congregational elders or those who are simply members have no responsibility before God for their actions. They do, and it is a responsibility they cannot pass on to an organization and its leaders. But the degree of blindness affecting them is something we cannot know, something only the heavenly Reader of hearts can determine. I personally prefer to embrace that outlook; I find life happier as a result.

45 Luke 23:34; Acts 3:14-17; 7:60.

12

Indoctrination and Subordination

> *The wisdom from above is in the first place pure; and then peace-loving, considerate, and open to reason; it is straightforward and sincere, rich in mercy and in the kindly deeds that are its fruit.*—James 3:17, *New English Bible.*

A COMMON characteristic of mass movements in general is that they express keen concern for the individual and the individual's interests. Yet, paradoxically, they usually produce a *subordination* of the individual, a discouragement of individual thinking. Conformity and uniformity are urged as crucial for the success of the movement, for its progress and growth. The individual has no importance except as he or she contributes to the success of the movement. All interests and all thinking must be subordinated to that goal.

The Watch Tower Society has made forceful statements about subordination and indoctrination—in two different ways. One is with regard to information coming from outside sources. The other is with regard to acceptance of the information it itself provides. This unequal standard leads to a paradox like that described above.

The Power to Resist Indoctrination

During the past half century Jehovah's Witnesses have made a notable record in resisting "brainwashing" techniques, particularly on the part of totalitarian systems, such as Nazism, that have tried to indoctrinate them with their ideologies. The January 1, 1959, issue of the *Watchtower* magazine presented this quotation about their record (pages 15, 16):

> A book published in the British Isles in 1957, called *Battle for the Mind, a Physiology of Conversion and Brainwashing,* said: "Those reported as among the best able to preserve their standards and beliefs in the German concentration camps during World War two were members of the sect of Jehovah's witnesses. This pacifist religious group has many strange beliefs, but these were implanted with such strength

and certainty by their religious leaders as to remain operative when continued debilitation and psychological degradation had reduced most other people of the highest ideals, but no specific loyalties, to accept the very lowest conception of individual and group morality. A safeguard against conversion is indeed a burning and obsessive belief in some other creed or way of life. History shows that well indoctrinated and trained soldiers can be just as brave and stubborn as Jehovah's witnesses."

In the infamous concentration camps, as in labor camps and in prisons, and in the face of persecution in other forms, Jehovah's Witnesses have shown a very high resistance to political indoctrination. Having personally lived through periods of intense adverse public feeling and pressure, mob violence and life-threatening situations, and having witnessed what it is like to live under a dictatorial government, I have no doubt as to the intensity of devotion of Jehovah's Witnesses generally in facing such stressful trials. I know how I felt and I believe I know how most of them feel in such times of testing.[1]

Note, however, that the source the above *Watchtower* item quotes makes the valid point that others besides Jehovah's Witnesses can and have displayed resistance to brainwashing with comparable success, including "well indoctrinated and trained soldiers." Thus it is often a case of one indoctrination versus another. At times both may be of a political or nationalistic origin, or they may both be of a religious nature, or views stemming from one of these sources may be pitted against views originating with one of the others.

Mere ability to resist, then, does not guarantee that the strength of the resistance *necessarily* springs from Scriptural convictions about the rightness or wrongness of certain actions. People in the past as in the present have been willing to undergo severe trials while holding to beliefs very different from and sometimes opposite to what Jehovah's Witnesses hold. History shows that people have at times been willing to sacrifice their lives to be obedient to a certain leadership, even when calm thought would show that that leadership was far removed from the example of Jesus Christ. The *basis* for one's beliefs, the *means* by which one came to be governed by those beliefs, must be the determining factor then as to whether the resistance is actually born of genuine Christianity or not.

1 See *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 11-20.

Consider briefly what the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines have said about indoctrination, mass persuasion and brainwashing, and about the means to counteract these. The June 15, 1956, issue of the *Watchtower* made these interesting and valid points (pages 358, 359):

> Note the admonition, "Prove to yourselves." [Romans 12:2, *NW*]. If you can prove to yourself from the Bible the thoughts of God you have adopted, no brainwashing will sweep them from your mind. It is not enough to know what you believe; know why you believe it.
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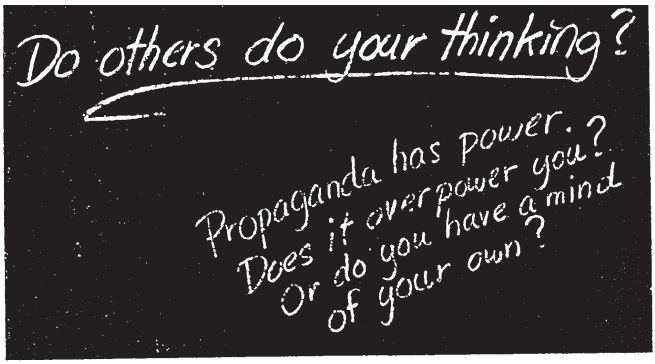
> An article in the *New York Times Magazine*, May 9, 1954, discussed Communist brainwashing techniques and concluded: "There is only one form of immunization against the totalitarian attack on human convictions." That one way was shown to be having deep convictions and thorough understanding of your belief. Otherwise, the article said, you "will become an easy and willing victim, howling with the wolves in the woods."

Deep conviction is here urged for the true Christian. That kind of conviction is not something attained on a group basis, it *must* be arrived at by the *individual* through personal thought, study and conclusions. The inspired exhortation to "prove to yourselves" the will of God clearly calls for that kind of personal thought.

Farther along this same article says (page 360):

> We usually believe what we want to believe, and one thing we like to believe is that we do our own thinking. Hence it is not too hard for clever propagandists to make us think their thoughts are ours. They plant the thought and nourish it, but do it so subtly that we may think it is our own.—2 Cor. 4:4, *NW*.
>
> "We may not be overreached by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his designs." We should know the clever tricks of propagandists. They are many, but to mention one, unsavory labels are stuck on anything that they oppose. . . . But to be pushed around by such social pressure, to be shoved and maneuvered by a fear of labels, is to show a pathetic immaturity, an inability to think for ourselves, a lack of intelligent convictions.

To fail to do your own thinking, to be influenced by pressure and unsavory labels is "to show pathetic immaturity," this material says. That the publishers of this information should be the same ones who would cause the expression "independent thinker" to become an "unsavory label" among its own members, may seem incredible, but that will be shown to be the case. In 1978, the August 22 issue of *Awake!* carried an article titled "Do Others Do Your Thinking?" and it exposed the following methods of propagandists (pages 3, 4):



EDUCATION teaches you how to think. Propagandists tell you what to think. True educators present all sides of an issue and encourage discussion. Propagandists hammer hard on their view and discourage discussion. Many times their true motives are hidden. They sift the facts, tell the favorable ones and conceal the others. They distort and twist facts, specialize in lies and half-truths. Your emotions, not your logical thinking abilities, are their target. Many fall easy prey because it takes no effort to feel, whereas thinking is hard labor. And the propagandist sees to it that his message is made to seem wise, the right and moral one, and gives you a sense of importance and belonging if you follow it. You are one of the smart ones, you are not alone, you are comfortable and secure—so they say.

Tyranny of authority, ridicule, name-calling, smears, slurs, personal digs—all such tactics are marshaled to assail your mind and take it by storm.

But even educated, sophisticated persons fall prey to a very unfair and untrue type of propaganda. This type assumes a superior air of dismissal of an opponent's viewpoint, treating it as rather pathetic and really not worth attention. It is what many evolutionists resort to in order to evade questions that they cannot answer. They can't prove their theory. So they resort to making assertions, and they scoff at all who dare to dispute them.

They prove neither their assertions nor their smears, but by the tyranny of authority they pontificate their opinions, squelch objections and intimidate opposers. It works, and supposedly intelligent people who know nothing about the theory believe it because "all intelligent people believe it."

The reader of this *Awake!* article is urged not to be overpowered, even though information may seem to be 'wise, right and moral,' even though it "gives you a sense of importance and belonging if you follow it." The material speaks forcefully in favor of open discussion, not letting the "tyranny of authority" keep you from testing *everything* as to its truthfulness. This is, it says, the course of wisdom.

Somewhat later, an article asking "Has Mass Persuasion Affected You?" gave these points for protecting oneself against being herded into mass thinking:

> The person most easily brainwashed is the "normal," average individual. Such a one is already conditioned to accept opinions of others rather than to form strong convictions of his own. On the other hand, those hardest to brainwash are ones with unconventional ideas and strong convictions and who are not afraid of what others think.

The article continues, listing five ways to resist brainwashing:

> 1. *Have strong convictions:* As noted above, the person most easily brainwashed is the one quickly swayed by others. Do not go along with an idea just because your associates accept it. Make sure that the views you adopt are truthful. The best way to do that is by comparing them with the inspired Word of God, which is ultimately "the truth."—John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16.
>
> 2. *Find the reason:* Inadvertently we often accept attitudes without knowing what is behind them. For instance, people in your community may have a negative view of certain races or ethnic groups. But why? If you find the reason unconvincing, why adopt the viewpoint?
>
> 3. *Resist improper thoughts:* . . . It is hard to avoid seeing, hearing or otherwise experiencing improper thoughts. But must we soak our minds full of them? Doing so will adversely affect our judgments and actions. How much better to resist improper thoughts and to dwell upon things that build up!—Eph. 5:3-5.
>
> 4. *Speak up for what you know to be right*: This will give you opportunity to test what you believe and more firmly entrench the truth in your life. If you are convinced of the truth of a matter after thorough search, do not be disconcerted by ridicule from others.
>
> 5. *Live the truth*: Do not look for excuses to compromise what you know to be right. Remember, if something is right and proper, it will work out for your good. Do not be tricked into thinking that you are missing out on something or that you are unduly restricted because you conform to what is right.[2]

All of these articles published by the Watch Tower Society encourage, with Bible support, a *personal determination* as to the truthfulness, the Scripturalness, of things taught, of what one believes. They do not advocate a "go along" attitude simply to conform to the majority or the views of a particular group. They encourage personal testing, personal weighing, personal acceptance or rejection. They urge the reader to be willing to stand up for what he or she believes with the confidence that holding to the truth, without compromise, will always work out for the best.

I agree wholeheartedly with all of these points. From my own experience as a Witness, I have little doubt that the majority of Jehovah's Witnesses are willing to bear the unpleasantness of disapproval or disdain they may receive from people on the outside because of holding to beliefs that are unpopular. I think, in general, they are sincere in this nonconformist role toward those on the outside and they are confident that, though unpopular, this is the right thing to do, the course God is pleased with. That has been true in my own case as well.

2 *Awake!* January 8, 1980, pages 13, 14.

There remains this question, however: Can persons be *consistent* if they uphold these sound, solid principles set forth in these articles when dealing with sources of information and influence *outside* their particular religious community and yet abandon these same principles within its boundaries? What, too, of an organization that urges its members to apply diligently such principles toward outside sources of information but discourages, disparages, yes, even denounces those who apply them with regard to the information *it itself* supplies?

Where this is the case, what reason is there for believing that the resistance to *outside* indoctrination, to "mass persuasion," is necessarily and genuinely the product of deep convictions that come from thinking for oneself? What assurance is there that it is not the case of one indoctrination versus another indoctrination, that one's refusal to be swayed by "unsavory labels" and disapproval and peer pressure from the outside is not to some degree the result of being anxious to avoid "unsavory labels" and disapproval and peer pressure from *within* one's own religious community? More importantly, how meaningful is it if an organization urges people to reject subtle error, manipulation of facts and half truths from other people if at the same time it disallows this approach to its own teachings? Furthermore, how honest and consistent is this when it also attempts to impose a rule of silence on any who would use their God-given mental powers to discern such error, even to the point of labeling any discussion of it as "rebellious talk"? How consistent is it to praise independent thinking with regard to outside information but to condemn it as a sign of immodesty and a lack of humility when it comes to information supplied within an organization?

It would seem that Jesus' words about 'cleansing the inside of the cup so that the outside may also become clean,' as also his warning against becoming like 'whitewashed graves' that externally present one appearance but internally have another, give serious reason for concern in this regard.[3]

A former Witness in Brazil, who had served as a "special pioneer" and who after many years began to ask questions about certain of the organization's teachings, expressed his own experience this way:

> I cannot deny that I have been and am still influenced by the noble principles aimed at outsiders advocated in [the organization's] literature. I relied wholeheartedly on those principles and believed that any matter would be rightly considered by the organization. It

3 Matthew 23:25-28.

is a painful blow to find out at the end that they are just part of a monologue, like other kinds of propaganda, that seeks no answer at all but only its own echo.[4]

Applying the Things Said

> *By your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.*—Matthew 12:37, *New International Version.*

Certainly consistency would call for all of Jehovah's Witnesses to apply within the organization the previously quoted published exhortations to:

- Do your own thinking; do not let others do it for you.
- If you believe something, be sure you know *why*, and "if you find the reason unconvincing, why adopt the viewpoint?"
- "Do not go along with an idea just because your associates accept it. Make sure that the views you adopt are truthful," soundly based and supported by Scripture.
- Do not be "pushed" into acceptance by pressure from others, by fear of what others think and fear of being labeled adversely, thereby demonstrating "pathetic immaturity."
- Do not let the "tyranny of authority" either "squelch objections" or intimidate you from testing statements made by such "authority."
- Do not fail to speak up on behalf of truth, nor seek "excuses to compromise."

Reasonably, this published exhortation is meant to be acted upon in a respectful, responsible and Christian way. What would the result be if one of Jehovah's Witnesses today were to express his or her intention to do exactly what is stated above—*within the organization*—doing so in just such a respectful, responsible and Christian manner?

Every man on the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, and I think virtually every elder in the more than 63,000 congregations earthwide, knows that this would almost certainly lead to that person's being viewed as dangerous, liable for disfellowshipment and ejection from the congregation. As has been amply documented, that is exactly what has happened and is happening to a growing number of persons who take those principles to heart.

4 Augusto Oliveira, in a letter dated December 30, 1987.

Contrast these published exhortations about the way to have genuine conviction with the reality of what exists among Jehovah's Witnesses. Reasonably, the more serious the issue and the more serious the possible consequences, the more important it would be to apply this counsel. As one example, the issue of "alternative service" had consequences that could mean imprisonment for a year or even years, being cut off from parents and family, perhaps a mate, loss of freedom to pursue whatever means of livelihood the person had, or to engage in any other pursuit that freedom normally allows. Consider, then, what Branch Committee members in many countries said on the matter of young male Witnesses who risked imprisonment by rejecting government provisions for "alternative service" in place of military service. To recall a few of the statements:

> Belgium: "Few brothers are really in position to explain with the Bible why they refuse . . . basically, they know it is wrong and that the Society views it as such."
>
> Denmark: "While many young brothers seem able to grasp arguments and think them out and explain them to a degree, it is felt that the majority of young brothers today follow the example of others and take the stand expected of them by the brotherhood without really understanding the basic principles and arguments involved, and without being able to explain their stand clearly."
>
> Hawaii: "Generally speaking, the brothers here have trouble seeing Bible principles governing the maintaining of strict neutrality. Once they know the Society's stand on such issues, they fully cooperate, but do not see the principles too clearly upon which our stand rests."
>
> Norway: "The brothers in Norway do not accept civilian work without a court sentence, mainly because they know that this is the Society's policy and they are loyal to the Society. It is difficult for them to understand why it is wrong to accept civilian work when the work itself is not wrong and condemned in the Bible. They cannot support their stand properly from the Scriptures."
>
> Spain: "When an elder discusses the matter of substitute service with someone, that person generally accepts that substitution amounts to equivalence. But this idea is not usually truly understood. Rather, it is taken to be the organization's viewpoint, and the elders present it as well as they can and the brothers loyally follow through as they know is expected of them. But it seems to us that many brothers find our reasoning somewhat artificial."

> Thailand: "Many have refused work out of a kind of group loyalty. They did not know the reason or principle why, but they heard a certain thing was wrong, so they refused."

If the published statements in the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines have any validity at all, then, when compared with the statements of these Branch Committee members, they clearly identify these young Witness men as either very vulnerable to brainwashing or as *already* victims of indoctrination and mass persuasion. In 1996, when the organization reversed its policy on alternative service, many hundreds, even thousands, of these young men were right then in prison, like thousands before them, *but they really did not know why the position they took, which led to their imprisonment, should have been taken*. They accepted a policy without seeing a sound basis for it, they allowed their decisions to be governed, not by solid evidence from God's Word, but by "group loyalty," and "organizational loyalty." These are the same forces that give such potency to indoctrination on the part of what Witnesses call "worldly" organizations. It is a case of doing what one's associates do and what the authority (the organization) says, even though one finds the reasons given to be insubstantial, even "artificial." The view of alternative service these persons accepted was clearly a "borrowed" one, not their own. Concern over what others in their religious community would think, concern over reprisals by the organization in the form of excommunication, certainly must have weighed heavily in their thinking, causing them to shut out any questions from their minds and simply submit. These young Witness men stood before government tribunals and declared themselves bound to an uncompromising position of rejecting alternative service unless first arrested and tried and sentenced to perform it by a judge, and they perhaps thought that such was their own conviction. But their inability to explain the reason for their stand shows that someone else has done their thinking for them. Recall the *Watchtower* statements earlier quoted:

> We usually believe what we want to believe, and one thing we like to believe is that we do our own thinking. Hence it is not too hard for clever propagandists to make us think their thoughts are ours. They plant the thought and nourish it, but do it so subtly that we think it is our own.

I understand why those Witness men felt as they did. Though the organizational policy today is considerably more technical and

involved than it was back in the 1940s, I found myself in a very similar position, and expected to experience imprisonment.[5] I felt the same pressures, pressures from outside the organization and pressures from inside it. The pressures from inside it exerted greater force for me and made me determined, not only to refuse to engage in armed warfare—a decision that was genuinely the result of my own conviction, one I still hold—but also to reject any type of service or work as a "conscientious objector," a decision that was not genuinely my own, that is, not the product of my own thinking and conclusions.

I would think that all the members of the Governing Body had read the articles earlier quoted from and the truthful principles they set out as regards having genuine conviction.[6] Yet when the statements made by the Branch Committee members about the lack of understanding on the alternative service policy were brought to the Governing Body's attention, though a majority of the Body favored changing the policy, I found it striking that there was an almost complete absence of dismay or even concern over the fact that men were willing to go to prison without really understanding why, that they were refusing to be "in subjection to the superior authorities" in this particular matter without being actually convinced that they had a Scriptural basis for having "taken a stand against" such "superior authorities."[7] The evidence that "group loyalty" and essentially blind acceptance of organizational policy was taking the place of—perhaps in some cases even masquerading as—personal conscience did not seem to be a matter of great concern and never played any real role in the Governing Body discussion. One Governing Body member even quoted approvingly the words of the Danish branch coordinator, who said with regard to placing the matter of alternative service as something to be decided by individual conscience: "I shudder to think of putting these young men on their own choice."[8] This not only betrays an enormous lack of confidence in the young men among Jehovah's Witnesses—or of confidence in the organization's having done anything to bring them out of spiritual babyhood—it also says in effect that the or-

5 My draft board initially refused my request for classification as a minister, turned me down on appeal, sent me my order to report for induction into the armed services and I would have been brought to trial and imprisonment had not appeals to state and federal authorities caused the local draft board to change its decision.

6 This might not be the case with all. In one Governing Body session Milton Henschel mentioned that he found it difficult to keep up even with the *Watchtower* articles and rarely read the *Awake!* magazine. That may well have been true of others.

7 Romans 13:1-5.

8 Statement quoted from a letter by Richard Abrahamson, later a member of the headquarters writing staff.

ganization should decide for them whether they should take a course involving possible, even probable, imprisonment without their having any true choice in the matter.

If, as the Society's published articles professedly advocate, these young men had done their own thinking, had taken a stand based genuinely on personal conscience, the evidence from the Branch Committee members is that many, perhaps most, would have taken a course different from the "policy" established by the organization. Under the then-prevailing arrangement that would have brought only one consequence: being declared "disassociated" from the congregation. Thus the organization apparently feels the men are not old enough, or mature enough, to make their own decisions, to think out their course and act according to their individual conscience before God as responsible Christians, but considers them old enough to spend part of their lives in prison without knowing why.

Youthfulness is really not at issue, however. What is true of these young Witnesses is true of most adult Witnesses with regard to a host of other issues—employment, various factors relating to blood, their associations, advanced education and similar matters. It should be remembered that the Branch Committee men who wrote the letters that revealed the facts just described are themselves adults, not young men. Yet *they themselves* were committed to following the organization's directives. They were willing to apply, or see applied, the prescribed sanction of excommunication toward any young men in their countries who might not conform to decreed policy.

As a further illustration, consider this issue coming to the Governing Body from Germany. Typical of many such cases, it primarily relates to a Witness woman whose non-Witness husband was stationed with the Occupation Forces in Germany. The letter (photocopied and containing its various misspellings, but with names blocked out for privacy) shown on the following pages sets out the details.

These German elders were admittedly confused by the organizational policy. On the one hand, it was allowable for a Witness to teach a nonreligious subject in a school owned by a religious organization, but not to teach the same subject in a school for children of army personnel, if the school was one funded or directed by the military.

Since the Watch Tower Society views all religious organizations, other than its own, as part of "Babylon the Great," the great harlot of Revelation, and hence as opposers of God and Christ, it

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den, April 25, 1979

Watchtower Bible &
Tract Society
117 Adam Street
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11 201
U.S.A.

Dear Brothers:

Enclosed you find a letter you sent to sister [redacted] You also enclosed a copy of the "Kingdom Service" from Sept. 1976 to give her more information about the matter in question.

In the same "Kingdom Service" is mentioned a schoolteacher who might teach mathematics at a school owned by a religious organization It seems that this is viewed as matter which is still within the grey area. After it was discussed in that time during our service meeting some of our american sisters in Germany whose husbands are in the arm; approached us and aksed if they now also could work under certain circumstances as teachers in army schools or perform work in the americ PX shops.

We wanted to make shure and wrote a letter to the german branch and asked about this matter. The brothers of the german branch answer us on Oct.26, 1976 and told us that they would forward this question to Brooklyn. We waited for the answer till March 22, 77. The bothers wrote us that the governing body in Brooklyn came to the conclusion that working for the "European Exchange Systems" (EES) or the "Post Exchanges" (PX) does not fall into the grey area anymore because one would be also guilty of supporting wrong practices. Even selling food or clothes in these shops that serve personal purposes would be in direct connection with the army and therefore wrong for a christian, especially as these shops are under the supervision of a general. So all these activities are not in the grey area anymore.

I discussed this now through with sister [redacted] who wanted to make shure in this matter and wrote you with the comment to me, that whatever the brothers in Brooklyn decide she wanted to do. After I read the answer to her, I discussed your letter with other elders and our circuit oversser. We all came to the conclusion that it seems to contradict the letter we received from the governing body. Although you mention in your letter that she works for the Department of Defense, you write in the next paragraph that you don't know in what kind of work she really is involved. We ask now if that is of any importance, because she gets paid from the army as much as somebody who works at a PX shop selling food or cloth. If the latter work is in the black area so would be working as a teacher.

These kind of situations were handled by the elders here in Germany quite well until the article in the "Kingdom Service" appeared about the brother working in a school owned by a religious organization. As we understood it, is this a matter of conscience and still within the grey area. From that time on we have to answer questions like: If a brother can work at a school owned by a religious organization why can't we work at a school that is supervised by the army? We are teaching only mathematic, english etc. and don't break our neutrality. If the first case is in the grey area, why not the second?

On a circuit assembly the question was raised by an elder: "If a sister would not quit her job as a teacher at a school supervised by the department of Defense has she to be disfellowshipped?" The clear answer from the district overseer was:"Yes".

After your letter to sister [redacted] we are confused again and would appreciate if we could straighten this matter out. We are looking forward to your answer while going ahead keeping Jehovah's organization clean.

We send you our warm christian love and greetings,

Your brother,

---

is difficult to see why such a different stand is taken as regards a school funded by the Defense Department as compared with one funded by a church organization. Yet for some indecipherable reason the one job is allowed, the other calls for disfellowshiping.

Even if a Witness does not understand, he or she must comply, and this is the mental attitude cultivated in the minds of all Witnesses. Note that the Witness involved is quoted as saying that "whatever the brothers in Brooklyn decide she wanted to do." This is viewed as the right attitude, the "theocratic" attitude, one of loyalty to God's organization. Yet it is exactly contrary to the principles published in the Society's magazines previously quoted, with their admonitions against permitting authoritarian indoctrination and letting others do your thinking for you.

When the elders here say that they will continue "keeping Jehovah's organization clean," what does this really mean? It means that those men will continue to apply with all due vigor whatever policy may be current and they will disfellowship anyone who does not adhere to that policy (for example, anyone engaging in work that was once classified as in a "grey area" but which, by organizational decree, has now been transferred to the "black area"). The elders may feel "confused," as they themselves say, but they would not allow this to keep them from

disfellowshiping the person and casting him or her out as unchristian. The main concern is to be obedient to Society policy. The feeling is created that 'if the organization tells us to do it we will not be held responsible by God if it is a mistake.' That same mentality has prevailed among men of many lands and in many periods who have excused themselves of guilt in serious injustice by the claim that "they were simply following orders from their superiors." Even the world's courts have rejected such an excuse. How much more should Christians reject it!

The binding, restricting effect that this concern for organizational submission can have on persons' minds was illustrated to me by an experience related by Robert Lang, then the assistant Bethel Home Overseer at the international headquarters. He had been transferred to a different congregation in the New York city area and he said that at one of the first meetings he attended there the elders approached him for advice. It seems that a young woman, the sister of one of the ministerial servants, was disfellowshiped and was still attending meetings. She had a small baby and brought it with her to the Kingdom Hall in a baby carriage. The Hall itself was on the second story of a building and the stairs were long and steep. The young woman would back up the stairs, pulling the baby carriage—with the baby in it—up the stairs as she went. The question the elders asked was whether it would be proper for the disfellowshiped woman's brother to assist her in getting up the stairs! Some thought so, others said, no, being disfellowshiped she should be considered as if she were not even there. To his credit, Lang said, "I don't know what the rule is on this, I only know one thing: if I'm around when she starts pulling that carriage up the stairs, I'm going to help her! When I think of what could happen if she were to stumble and lose control of the carriage . . . ."[9]

The most frightening thing about this is that adult men did not feel they could be guided by their own hearts and minds in a circumstance so obviously calling for human kindness. The pressing concern for them was—not the danger to the infant's life—but *what the organizational policy allowed* in such cases. They gave evidence of having become emasculated men in matters of ethics, of right and wrong.

This was not some rare instance. In *Crisis of Conscience* mention is made of articles I wrote in 1974 which greatly moderated the attitude toward those in a "disfellowshiped state."[10] The as-

9 Robert Lang was for me one example of an individual's being the kind of person he was, not because of the organization, but in spite of the organization.

10 See *Crisis of Conscience*, page 37, 358.

signment to write these articles resulted from cases involving disfellowshiped persons who wanted to attend meetings but who were without transportation to get to the meeting place. One was a young girl who had been disfellowshiped while yet in her teens. She had later moved into a country area. She applied for "reinstatement" but the elders informed her that she needed to attend the meetings at the Kingdom Hall to qualify. There was no public transportation and she had no automobile. Her mother wrote to the headquarters, expressing concern for the danger of her young daughter walking country roads alone, and pleading that some "dispensation" be given so that the elders could help her.

At the same time another letter had been received from elders in a midwestern congregation. It related the case of a woman who had been disfellowshiped and who was then in a drug rehabilitation center. She, too, wished to attend meetings but could only leave the center if someone signed her out, accepting responsibility for her and providing needed transportation. The elders said they had been doing this and were quick to add that when they signed her out they did not speak to her, that she simply got in the car, rode silently to the Kingdom Hall with them, sat in the back of the hall and after the meetings went out to the car and rode back to the center. Why did they write their letter? Because they were deeply concerned that they might not be acting in accordance with existing organizational policy in what they were doing!

At the Governing Body session, the decision was to allow such help and, as stated, I was assigned to write articles setting forth the change in policy.[11] The following Sunday after this session, I went to New Jersey to give a public talk. While there, one of the local elders approached me to ask a question. He related the situation of a disfellowshiped woman who lived some miles from the Kingdom Hall and who had requested help in getting to meetings. She said that her personal circumstances did not allow her to pay weekly taxi fares and without help she would be forced to walk the considerable distance. He said that that very Sunday some of the "sisters" in the congregation had been traveling together in a car and had passed her on the road. He stated that when they got to the hall they were in tears because they felt obliged to pass her by without stopping. I was particularly happy to inform him that a decision had been made—by what was to him and all Witnesses their "Supreme Court"—that such help was now allowable.

11 See the *Watchtower*, August 1, 1974, pages 460-473.

Again, the tragic feature in all this is the way in which good and beautiful human emotions are stifled, chained and paralyzed by organizational dominance and indoctrination. In reality, in the 1974 articles I went far beyond the matter of simply providing transportation or showing other acts of common courtesy to disfellowshiped persons, moderating the position in many other areas and particularly as regards family relationships. The articles were approved by the Governing Body before publishing. Indicative of the actual heart attitude of many, perhaps most Witnesses, is that the articles were generally given appreciative reception, viewed as expressing more correctly the merciful attitude of God and Christ.

As also stated in *Crisis of Conscience*, the year after my resignation from the Governing Body the September 15, 1981 *Watchtower* returned to a policy regarding disfellowshiped persons much like the pre-1974 position. In some ways it is now even more rigid than it was then. Some elders and traveling overseers, regrettably, expressed satisfaction at what they saw as "a tightening up" of organizational policy. And, as we have seen in Chapter 11, today men and women are allowing their treatment of other humans to be governed strictly by that policy. In so doing they are allowing their consciences to be overridden by men, their compassion to be turned on or shut off at will by organizational decree. Were the organization to change its policy tomorrow, the majority would change with it. This is indoctrination in one of its worst forms.

What is true regarding the acceptance of organizational *policies* is equally true of organizational *doctrine* and *interpretation* of Scripture. It is the almost unquestioning acceptance of these that in fact precedes and underlies the related acceptance of policies. It is equally true that the vast majority of Witnesses, elders included, if given only the Bible itself would have serious difficulty in presenting evidence in support of a considerable portion of those teachings. Yet elders are willing to take disfellowshiping action against any congregational member who seriously questions or expresses conscientious disagreement with any of such teachings.

What causes people to let an organization supplant their conscience with its own viewpoint, or at least to superimpose its collective "conscience" on their own? What moves elders to disfellowship people when the elders themselves may not be fully

convinced in their own minds and hearts that the organization's position is necessarily the right one, genuinely Scriptural?[12]

I have asked myself those questions as to my own past course as a Witness. Although the only disfellowshiping cases in which I had any personal involvement as a member of a judicial committee related to acts of clear immorality, I know that for most of my life as a Witness I consistently sought to uphold and explain all policies and teachings advanced. I view myself as having average intelligence and yet for decades I was wholly devoted to supporting the full scope of whatever the organization published, and I could say, like the apostle Paul, that I 'was making greater progress in my religion than many of my own age and was more zealous than they for the traditional views' of the organization.[13] How did it come about? And how does it come about with millions of other persons? There are a number of factors. Consider an example:

Methods Employed

This particular man had been very depressed and he was attracted to the religion for a number of reasons. Of the first meeting he attended, he relates:

> I enjoyed the stimulating conversation and energetic atmosphere at the meeting. These people related to each other as easily as brothers and sisters and clearly felt they were part of one global family. They seemed very happy with their lives. After my depression of the previous month, I was invigorated by all that positive energy. I went home that night feeling lucky to have met such nice people. . . . I was elated at the thought that . . . my life's path was now on the only "true track" . . . the thought that God was actively working to bring about the Garden of Eden. No more war, no more poverty, no more ecological destruction. Just love, truth, beauty, and goodness. . . .
>
> We truly identified with the early Christians: the more people opposed us, the more committed we felt. It was as if we were God's army in the middle of a spiritual war—the only ones who could go to the front lines and fight Satan each day.

Very early he was encouraged to share with others what he had learned. Of those who responded to his witness, he says:

> We saw believers as people searching for God, or looking for spiritual meaning in their lives. . . . It was always amazing to me to realize how many people in this category told us they had just been praying to God to show

12 One might also ask how different the attitude created is from that prevailing during the Nazi regime in Germany, when many individuals excused their acts as simply obedience to a higher authority, thus disclaiming personal responsibility.

13 Galatians 1:14.

> them what He wanted them to do with their lives. Many believed they were "spiritually" led to meet one of our members.

These words could easily be found on the lips of many of Jehovah's Witnesses. They could as easily be found in an experience published in the *Watchtower* or *Awake!* magazines. Yet they are not the words of one of Jehovah's Witnesses. They are the words of Steve Hassan, a former member of the Unification Church headed by Korean leader Reverend Moon, a movement often referred to as the "Moonies."[14] In his two and half years of association he became an ardent advocate and trusted leader of that movement, completely loyal and dedicated to its mission. He resisted any effort by family members or others to take him away from what he was convinced was "the truth."

After an accident opened the way for a complete change of viewpoint, he determined to provide others with the benefit of his insight into the means by which humans can be led to give over their minds and consciences to a religious system. The book he subsequently wrote did not discuss Jehovah's Witnesses. Admittedly, it dealt principally with movements that resort to obvious and extreme methods of indoctrination, including physical isolation, rituals and chants, and similar practices. Yet there are certain elements he describes as basic in mind control which surely merit serious thought. Consider the following:

Those who become candidates for mind control, as found in such groups as the "Moonies," are not, in the majority, "strange" people. Of the thousands of persons he spoke with or counselled, Hassan stated: "The great majority were stable, intelligent, idealistic people," "the sheer number of sincere, committed members whom a newcomer meets are probably far more attractive to a prospective convert than any doctrine or structure."[15] Why, then, did they allow others to dominate their thinking?

> The essence of mind control is that it encourages dependence and conformity, and discourages autonomy and individuality. . . . [it seeks] to *undermine an individual's integrity in making his own decisions.*[16]

14 Quotations are from Steve Hassan's book *Combatting Cult Mind Control* (Park Street Press, 1988), first edition, pages 13, 19, 24, 42.

15 *Combatting Cult Mind Control,* first edition, pages 42, 76.

16 Ibid., page 55. An article in *Awake!,* August 8, 1965, page 18, similarly said: "Contrary to common belief, it is the 'normal,' 'average' person that is the most easily indoctrinated. Such a person is 'normal' because he has been influenced to such an extent by the community that he conforms to all its social standards and behaves only in an 'acceptable' way. His held opinions are often borrowed and usually do not come from independent, intellectual thinking." The article claims that Jehovah's Witnesses are different in these areas. Yet in most cases they exemplify the very kind of person described.

Watchtower training causes Jehovah's Witnesses to view "independent thinking" as sinful, an indication of disloyalty to God and his appointed "channel." Pointing to a further element of mind control, that of "control of information," On the basis of his experience with the "Moonies," Hassan states:

> . . . the ideology is internalized as "the truth," the only "map" of reality. All that is good is embodied in the group. . . . All that is bad is on the outside . . . there is never a legitimate reason for leaving . . . . Members are told that the only reasons why people leave are weakness, temptation, insanity, brainwashing, . . . pride, sin and so on.[17]

I do not favor the loose application of the word "cult" that has become common today. As someone observed, for many the term is a label they attach to any religion they do not like. I do believe that a religion that is not a "cult" may nonetheless manifest many cultlike qualities. Of the elements presented above as fundamental features of religions exercising mind control, it is a fact that every single one of them is clearly present among Jehovah's Witnesses.

In the case of Jehovah's Witnesses there is no physical isolation like that employed by some religious movements (as is also done by officials who take persons as political prisoners for indoctrination). Yet there *is* isolation of a very definite kind.[18]

The organization takes the Biblical exhortation 'not to be part of the world' and applies this as meaning that Jehovah's Witnesses should restrict to the minimum their association with anyone not of their faith—which, in the final analysis, means anyone not embracing the *current* teachings of the organization.[19] Such persons are "not in the Truth," which is the same as saying that they are all "in the lie." All non-Witnesses, no matter how fine their personal qualities, no matter how high their standards, no matter how deep their faith in God, Christ and the Bible may be, are "worldly." Social contact is acceptable if it is done with a view to creating an opportunity to "witness" to the "worldly persons"; it is discouraged on any other basis.

A Witness may, in conversation with a "worldly" neighbor or fellow employee or business associate, steer discussion into religious topics but, as I know from experience, the thought is always "how to give the person a witness." There is concern that the direction of the conversation will be one way and one way only.

17 *Combatting Cult Mind Control*, pages 61, 62, 84.

18 As regards "brainwashing," I also question the correctness of applying the term to the Witnesses. See the essay on this subject on the Commentary Press web site: *www.commentarypress.com*

19 John 17:14-16.

It is not to see if the Witness might learn something from the other person or to have any genuine interchange of thoughts and ideas. After all, that would be useless since the other person is "not in the Truth"! When the person conversed with proves not inclined to agree with the "witness" presented, whether a teaching such as the significance of 1914 or any other topic, the Witness generally feels that the conversation is unproductive and may as well stop. A mental barrier is raised toward any remarks heard that do not conform to the current teachings of the organization. Evidence that might disprove any of those teachings usually causes the Witness to respond in a programmed way—to quickly shut the door of his mind to that evidence.

Similarly with reading material. While the Watch Tower Society's publications quote frequently, at times liberally, from all sorts of "worldly" publications, including sociological, psychological and religious works, the feeling is generated that *only the organization can safely do this*, and that, particularly as regards religious publications, including Bible commentaries, it is dangerous for the average Witness to read such sources of information. Not merely caution, but distrust and aversion are engendered. Evidently the faith developed by the organization is not viewed as sufficiently robust to resist the effects of such reading.

Again, in this area one finds two separate messages offered in the Watch Tower publications, one directed to those outside the organization, the opposite toward those within it. Those outside are urged to question their religious beliefs, no matter how long they have held them. Articles titled "An Open or a Closed Mind—Which Do You Have?" and "An Open Mind Wins God's Approval" appear in the November 22, 1984, *Awake!* and another titled "Are You Open to New Ideas?" in the January 15, 1989 *Watchtower*. These are all directed entirely to *non-Witnesses*. The first article, on page 3, gives a definition of prejudice as:

> A judgment or opinion, favorable or unfavorable, formed beforehand or without due examination; a mental decision based on other grounds than reason or justice; especially, a premature or adversely biased opinion.

Recognizing that decisions made "without due examination" or judgments reached "on other grounds than reason or justice" are evidences of a closed mind, the article advocates an "open mind" which is "receptive to new information and ideas," and "willing to examine and evaluate information without a biased attitude." Farther along it states:

> A closed mind may indicate lack of knowledge. We may know so little about a subject, or have information so distorted or incomplete, that the facts necessary to reach proper conclusions are missing . . . .
>
> A closed mind may betray a lack of interest in the subject or a reluctance to look into the matter. In fact, it could be a sign of uncertainty or doubt. For example, if we are unable to defend our religious views, we may find ourselves lashing out against those who challenge our beliefs, not with logical arguments, but with slurs and innuendos. This smacks of prejudice and of a closed mind. . . . Even some religious people have closed minds. They are interested only in "their" religion, showing no willingness to as much as listen to the views of others.
>
> . . . What makes a religion right is its total adherence to God's Word. Whether our religion meets this criterion or not can only be determined by open-mindedly comparing it with the Bible.

It seems incredible that the organization's writers cannot see the obvious inconsistency between these exhortations to open-mindedness given to "outsiders" and the exactly opposite admonition given to those within the organization. A "Question from Readers" in the May 1, 1984, *Watchtower*, page 31, argues that it is right that Jehovah's Witnesses, going to people's doors offering them Watch Tower literature, should *refuse* to accept religious literature the householders visited may in turn offer them. Among other things it states:

> Witnesses do not go to people's doors searching for truth or enlightenment. Rather, they already have devoted countless hours learning the truth from God's Word . . . .
>
> Jehovah's Witnesses are not ignorant of others' beliefs. They have gained considerable basic knowledge of the doctrinal beliefs of religions common in their area. . . .
>
> So it would be foolhardy, as well as a waste of valuable time, for Jehovah's Witnesses to accept and expose themselves to false religious literature that is designed to deceive . . . .
>
> As loyal Christians let us hold to God's standards, feeding our minds on what is true and righteous, and holding appreciatively and loyally to the channel from which we first learned Bible truth.

The open-mindedness hoped for from non-Witness readers, causing them to examine literature that offers views contrary to their religious beliefs, is paradoxically discouraged among Witnesses. *Watchtower* and *Awake!* articles disparage closed-mindedness and a "seclusionist attitude," yet that attitude is nowhere more evident than among Jehovah's Witnesses themselves. Witnesses may say they are 'informed about other religions and their beliefs.' But for the vast majority, the information they have is only what their own religious organization has seen fit to give

them. It is prepackaged, carefully edited information, generally with the conclusions already spelled out for them.

An Open or a Closed Mind

—Which Do You Have?

PEOPLE do have difficulties getting along with one another, do they not? And although most of us like to think of ourselves as being open-minded, let us ask ourselves with complete honesty: Is the narrow-minded and bigoted person really always the "other fellow"?

In reality your mind may be more closed than you imagine. Do you at times say: "Two things I never talk about are religion and politics"? Or do you turn up your nose at foods you have not eaten before? "Snails? Never!" Or how do you feel about unfamiliar types of medical treatment? "Acupuncture? Pure quackery!" Or do you "know"—as, for example, "everyone" in Germany does—that Gypsies are thieves, North Germans are stubborn, everyone from Berlin is a loudmouth, Swabians are stingy and foreigners are lazy? Of course, similar ideas are found everywhere—yes, in your country too.

What Is an Open Mind?

An open mind is free from the fetters of prejudice, which by one dictionary is defined as follows: "A judgment or opinion, favorable or unfavorable, formed beforehand or without due examination; a mental decision based on other grounds than reason or justice; especially, a premature or adversely biased opinion."

A necessary part of life is that we make decisions and reach judgments. But decisions made "without due examination" or judgments reached "on other grounds than reason or justice" are evidences of a closed mind.

Having an open mind, on the other hand, means to be receptive to new information

Persons of the public are urged to keep an open mind toward Watch Tower literature even though it challenges their present religious beliefs.

Do you wisely destroy apostate material?

Witnesses are urged to immediately destroy literature that is critical of their beliefs. (Note the mailman just leaving, indicating that the woman has not even examined what she received.)

The writer of the article seems not to realize that, if the persons at whose homes Witnesses call to offer their literature are members of a religion in which they believe firmly and from which they have received whatever Bible knowledge they possess, those householders could use the identical argument in refusing Watch Tower literature, rejecting it as literature that is false and "designed to deceive," something that it would be "a waste of valuable time" to read.[20] They, too, may have read church publications about Jehovah's Witnesses and therefore say they "are not ignorant" of their beliefs. They would, of course, then be viewed by Witnesses as "close-minded," prejudiced. Surely the words of Jesus are applicable here, when he says:

> Why do you observe the splinter in your brother's eye and never notice the plank in your own? How dare you say to your brother, "Let me take the splinter out of your eye," when all the time there is a plank in your own? Hypocrite! Take the plank out of your own

20 The *Awake!* magazine article on having an open mind carries an illustration of a man expressing, by face and hand, determined rejection. The picture could be that of a Catholic or Protestant rejecting literature of Jehovah's Witnesses that differs with his beliefs. It could just as well be one of Jehovah's Witnesses adamantly rejecting literature that differs with his beliefs.

eye first, and then you will see clearly enough to take the splinter out of your brother's eye.[21]

The September 8, 1987, *Awake!* magazine contains articles directed primarily toward those of the Lutheran faith. One article is built around quotations from sermons of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Protestant theologian executed by the Nazis. Presumably, if a Witness at the door of a German householder were offered a pamphlet containing Bonhoeffer's sermons, he or she would be expected to reject this out of loyalty as something that it would be "foolhardy" and "a waste of valuable time" to read. In his or her *Awake!* magazine, however, the sermon quotations from this Protestant pastor—according to Watch Tower definition, a member of "Babylon the Great"—now become acceptable, "sanctified" for reading by loyal Witnesses.

The article makes several valid points as to the deprecating view of the Bible held by some Protestant theologians and other facets where many church members show themselves remiss. Consider, however, these points made on pages 8, 10 and 11 (the words in italics are those the *Awake!* writer is quoting from Bonhoeffer's sermons):

> Note the following excerpts from some of his sermons. Ask yourself: What would heeding his words mean for the Lutheran Church? for *my* church?
>
> ***"In religion only one thing is of essential importance, that it be true."*** This agrees with what Jesus said: "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth."—John 4:24; see also John 8:32; 14:6; 16:13.
>
> Are you sure that everything your church teaches is really true?
>
> ***If Your Church Fails to Act, Will You?***
>
> If, after making an honest investigation, you are less than pleased with what you see, do more than just complain. A journalist, while commenting on Karl Barth's statement that a church is its members, logically concluded: "Church members . . . are responsible for what the church says and does." So ask yourself: Am I willing to share responsibility for *everything* my church says and does?

21 Matthew 7:3-5, *JB*.

> You may sincerely believe that your church is no part of false religion that God says he will soon destroy. But your life depends upon being 100 percent sure. Are you?

For those of other religions, absolute truth is set as the criterion—everything should be "*really* true." They should be "100 percent sure" about their religion. And if they are "less than pleased" with what they see, they should "do more than just complain," because they share responsibility for "*everything* [their] church says and does." On the basis of all that has been presented thus far from Watch Tower publications about loyalty and submission to the Theocratic organization, just imagine what would happen if any Witness were to follow this exhortation in his religion! Instead, he must realize that these powerful words apply only to *them*, not to *us*. Many of the criticisms the *Awake!* article presents regarding Lutheranism have validity. But those wrongs do not make Witness positions right, their errors do not cancel out Watch Tower errors or make them less reprehensible. Notably, the *Awake!* writer can quote Protestant sources, including Lutherans, who level such criticisms themselves. These persons can do so without being excommunicated from their churches. One of Jehovah's Witnesses could not do the same. When he sees clear evidence of error, of unscriptural policies, in his religion, he should not complain, and certainly not leave (as is implied that Lutherans should do regarding their religion). Instead, he should quietly 'wait for Jehovah to straighten it out in his due time.' What is right and needful on the part of Lutherans is at the same time wrong and unnecessary on the part of Witnesses. And the remarkable thing is that most Witnesses (including the writer of the *Awake!* article) see no double standard in all this, see nothing amiss in giving an exhortation to others that they cannot apply to themselves.

The earlier-quoted "Question from Readers" assures *Watchtower* readers that their refusal to read or even accept literature householders offer them is not being "narrow-minded," that—far from this—it is "out of wisdom and respect for God's counsel" that they take this course. But the reasoning never comes to grips with the real issue. While referring to Paul and his course in boldly speaking the truth, it never demonstrates that he refused to discuss opposing views or defend himself against criticism. To the con-

trary, Paul was willing to be "all things to all men."[22] Instead, the *Watchtower* relies on bias and prejudgment and the use of "unsavory labels" ("false religious literature" which is "designed to deceive," "poisonous writings" distributed "for the sake of dishonest gain," buying which would be to 'finance wickedness') to give force to its claims. But by this article loyal Witnesses have been *told* that they are not being narrow-minded when they urge others to look critically at their religion while refusing to do the same themselves—and they *accept*. God's "channel" has spoken and that is enough.

The sum of the evidence is, then, that although no extreme physical isolation occurs, a very effective *mental* isolation is produced by the organization's interpretation placed on Jesus' words about not being part of the world. The community of believers becomes quite insulated and intellectually sealed off from any source of Scriptural material other than that coming from the one voice, that of the organization. They are continually told that this is the only way to keep them from being misled. The apparent aim is to create a sterile atmosphere in which the views and interpretations of the organization can circulate freely without having to confront any challenge.

As a rule the longer one is associated with the organization the more concentrated his or her social contacts are, the more restricted friendships are to those within the organization. Even "worldly" relatives, meaning non-Witness relatives, are often gradually shunted off to a rather cool and distant relationship.

One's thus becoming part of an exclusive community with only limited, "necessary" contact with anyone outside is the factor that gives such enormous power to any disfellowshiping decree established by the organization. One's whole social life resides within the organization. If associated for many years, to be disfellowshiped means to be cut off from virtually every friendship one has. Particularly for those in their elderly years of life this can present a devastatingly depressing prospect. The situation parallels closely that of persons in apostolic times who were 'cast out of the synagogue,' since the synagogue was the center of all social contact in a Jewish community.[23]

I strongly doubt that most persons, in reading the Bible itself, would ever be led to view Jesus' words about not being part of the world in the extreme way conveyed by the Watch Tower publications. Not that

22 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.
23 Compare John 12:42.

such an exclusivistic view is not found in the Bible. It is. But it is the viewpoint taken by the Pharisees, not that taught by Jesus Christ or his apostles. As already seen, the very name "Pharisee" means "separated" or "exclusive." In their extreme views, this religious group sought to be separate from, and exclude from their association, all persons not holding to their particular traditional teachings and standards of holiness, viewing all such as "unclean."[24]

Jesus Christ set a very different example from such extremists and this incensed them, caused them to condemn him and the way he associated with others. In reading his words, not only in the Sermon on the Mount but in all his teachings, one finds that Jesus' *primary focus* was not on an elaborate set of doctrinal interpretations but on the real goal set out in the Scriptures, their true aim and thrust, namely love of God and love of neighbor. His words emphasize conduct and deeds that manifest this love, and his apostles urged the same in all their letters. When they deal with the need to be discriminatory as to association, it is with regard to essentials, not minor points of difference, and definitely not because of extra-Biblical policies, rulings, reasonings and interpretations, the product of sectarian thinking.

In his letter to the Galatians the apostle Paul does bring in the matter of teachings, saying:

> I am astonished at the promptness with which you have turned away from the one who called you and have decided to follow a different version of the Good News. Not that there can be more than one Good News; it is merely that some troublemakers among you want to change the Good News of Christ; and let me warn you that if anyone preaches a version of the Good News different from the one we have already preached to you, whether it be ourselves or an angel from heaven, he is to be condemned. I am only repeating what we have told you before: if anyone preaches a version of the Good News different from the one you have already heard, he is to be condemned.[25]

Incredible as it may seem, those words are today applied by the Watch Tower Society to any who fail to agree and who express their disagreement—not with the first-century apostolic message that Paul preached—but with its own current teachings. Thus after having earlier quoted these very words of Paul in a "Question from Readers" reply, the April 1, 1986, *Watchtower* goes on to say (page 31):

24 Matthew 15:1-9; John 9:16; see also "Pharisees" in the Watch Tower publication *Insight on the Scriptures*.
25 Galatians 1:6-9, *JB*.

> Approved association with Jehovah's Witnesses requires accepting the entire range of the true teachings of the Bible, including those Scriptural beliefs that are unique to Jehovah's Witnesses.

The article argues that those who do not are rightfully excommunicated. This means forcing Paul's words out of context, actually turning them around to mean exactly the opposite of what they say. For Paul shows that there is only ONE good news and that is the good news as preached in the first century, not something appearing for the first time in some twentieth-century publication or magazine. It is the good news that any person can find in any Bible without being dependent on some modern-day publication to convey it to him, not something that is incomprehensible without such a publication. It is not some "special message" of post-apostolic development which has the effect of making the Bible alone insufficient, as implied by the Watch Tower president's morning remarks to the headquarters family, quoted earlier.[26]

According to the apostle, there is one and only one message to deliver, the one already preached by him and others at that time and recorded by inspired Bible writers, and no one, angel or man, has the right to bring in some other message than that already given, which Paul calls the "good news about the Christ."[27] It is the "*everlasting* good news," the "faith that was *once for all time* delivered to the holy ones," and it therefore needs no adjusting, no modernizing or updating by uninspired men in our time.[28]

The First Stages

Thinking back over my forty-three years of active association, I have no doubt that the almost unquestioning submission found among Jehovah's Witnesses develops gradually. I have no hesitation in saying that I gained considerable knowledge of the Scriptures from my active association with the Witness organization, far more than I had previously.[29] At the same time, I eventually came to realize that the organization itself brought people along only to

26 See Chapter 2, pages 32, 33.
25 2 Corinthians 2:12; 4:4; 9:13.
28 Revelation 14:6; Jude 3.
29 This is true even though I was born of parents who were already Witnesses.

a certain point. It brought them, at times, from Biblical "illiteracy" to what might be called a "second- or third-grade level." They learned how to locate specific texts in the Bible, received some knowledge of Biblical history, and read for themselves certain fundamental teachings directly in the Scriptures and for many this was not only helpful but very impressive. If there is any one thing I am grateful for as regards my forty years of full-time service as a Witness, it is that at least I did turn the attention of some persons to the Bible who previously knew little or nothing about it. In this particular aspect the work of Jehovah's Witnesses merits commendation and the failure of many religious denominations to build up interest in the Bible merits concern. In directing people to God's Word as found in the Scriptures, Jehovah's Witnesses perform a helpful service.

If only that initial direction were held to and built upon in what follows—but there is where the problem rests.

After this initial raising of their level of knowledge, the vast majority of persons enter onto a plateau. The longer they associate the more organizational teachings take preeminence over actual study and meditation on the Scriptures themselves. As a result, many, perhaps most Witnesses, after twenty, thirty or forty years of association know relatively little more about the Bible than they did after their first year or so of association. They are left as children, with great dependence on the "mother" organization, and a feeling of insecurity without its direction of their thinking and lives. Their spiritual growth stagnates—unless they themselves go *beyond* the Society's "program" and by personal effort gain greater knowledge and understanding of Scripture. As a result of letting the organization act as their conscience for them, their spiritual strength is in some respects less in later life than it was in their early period of association. They may endure hardships, even sacrifice, to be loyal to the organization and thus may give the appearance of spiritual fortitude. But they do not have the strength to make genuinely personal decisions of conscience and accept the consequences of those decisions.

Initially I was attracted by the appeal to reasoning made by many Watch Tower publications. Since these publications were often designed to encourage people of other religions to reexamine and reevaluate, even to question, the validity of their religion's teachings, it was imperative that these publications stress the need

to think for oneself, to do independent thinking. People in the beginning are regularly encouraged not to believe teachings without first testing them thoroughly according to Scripture. But the testing is restricted almost entirely to the individual's *previously held* beliefs, and only certain of these are targeted for testing. Such teachings as the inherent immortality of the human soul, the belief in a hell of literal fire and physical torment or similar points are the focus of much of the "testing." The argumentation is generally quite well developed on these points. Because of this the person is often sufficiently impressed that, as other presentations of teachings follow, he or she inclines to accept these more or less on trust, without requiring the same evidence.

Remarkably, most Witnesses are so impressed by these initially targeted teachings about the soul's mortality, hell's being synonymous with the grave or the death state, and similar points that they think and speak of them as "the basic doctrines" of the Scriptures, teachings forming the principal criteria for identifying the one, true religion.

Yet one cannot find in the Bible even one chapter devoted to a discussion of such subjects. It is not that people in Bible times did not have beliefs about the immortality of the soul, or a place of torment for the wicked. Most races and religions did. But the Bible writers were not inspired to make discussion or refutation of these the prominent, fundamental subjects of their writings. The texts and statements that do relate to them are only incidental to the discussion of other topics.

The average Witness, then, may feel quite well equipped to discuss the soul or hellfire but feel quite lost if asked to discuss, for example, Paul's letter to the Romans and its forceful arguments regarding salvation by faith, not by works. Aside from a certain set of "proof texts" used in support of principal Witness teachings, the majority of members would find great difficulty in discussing intelligently most of the apostolic letters.

Catechistical Approach

While "personal study" is often encouraged, that study is carefully programmed. Witnesses are expected to read specific Watch Tower publications in preparation for the five weekly meetings. Although one of these meetings includes a reading of one or more chapters of the Bible, this represents only a minor portion of the total assigned

material.[30] Focus is on the organization's own publications rather than the Scriptures themselves. The meetings where the assigned material is discussed are themselves also thoroughly programmed, with no open discussion provided for. They are largely question-and-answer sessions, with the questions already prepared by the organization and the answers set forth in the assigned publication. This is a "catechistical" approach which does not encourage genuine mental effort or frank discussion but merely the repeating (even if in one's own words) of the thinking of the headquarters organization. Actually, in almost every meeting I have attended a large percentage of those participating read their response to the question word for word directly from the assigned publication.

Aside from this rigid programming, another reason there is seldom any raising of serious questions is, as the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* articles quoted point out, that most people find "thinking is hard labor."[31] Most are willing for others to do their thinking for them, though, as again those articles observe, they 'like to believe that they are doing their own thinking' and to believe that what they adopt as truth has come through their use of their mental powers.[32] The information contained in the Society's publications is presented with great positiveness and few feel inclined to question its rightness or put forth the mental effort to test its arguments.

So, while questions are permissible, the questioner is always expected to accept whatever answer is provided from the organization's publications. The individual should allow himself to be "readjusted" by what the publication says. For one to state that the publication's answer is frankly not satisfying, that the argument does not appear to be sound, that human reasoning and interpretation seem to be superimposed on Scripture, is to lay oneself open to possible labeling as "self-willed," "lacking in humility," "presumptuous." Doubts are deemed a lack of faith, evidence of spiritual weakness, a prideful spirit, a leaning toward apostasy.

True, there is periodic acknowledgement in the publications that the writers are, after all, "imperfect men," and that the organization has "never claimed to be infallible." In actual practice it works out quite differently. One finds out that this only applies to the *past*, not to the *present*. While the organization must recognize that it has changed a considerable number of its past teachings—which

30 As perhaps at least some indication of the degree of the relative importance given to the Bible itself, if there are young children enrolled in the Theocratic School, often their assignment is to do this Bible reading.

31 *Awake!*, August 22, 1978, page 3.

32 The *Watchtower*, June 15, 1956, page 360.

makes it evident that they were in error—it does not feel moved to modesty by those errors, so as to remind its readers that what it *now* says may also suffer due to that same imperfection. To the contrary, Jehovah's Witnesses are called on to take whatever is currently taught *as if it were* infallible. In effect they are told, "You should accept everything published as absolute truth until such time as we may tell you it isn't." This is, purely and simply, mind control.

In all this, the Watch Tower organization is not engaging in something new or distinctive. It is simply following a pattern, one common in the past and in the present.

Intellectual Intimidation

To achieve this surrender of one's thought processes, congregation members are constantly presented with the organization's claims of divine backing and authority, of the "faithful and discreet slave." As but one example, the June 15, 1964, *Watchtower* on page 365 stated:

> As Jehovah revealed his truths by means of the first-century Christian congregation so he does today by means of the present-day Christian congregation. Through this agency he is having carried out prophesying on an intensified and unparalleled scale. All of this activity is not an accident. Jehovah is the one behind all of it.

We understand that God "revealed his truths" at the time of the first-century congregation by divine inspiration, by divine communication and direction to the apostles and others, with the result of inspired speech and writings that are as true today as they were nineteen hundred years ago. To say that "so he does today by means of the present day Christian congregation" is, for all practical purposes, to claim divine inspiration. Jehovah is made responsible for "all of it" and what servant of God would want to resist Him? As former traveling overseer Ron Frye observed:

> The Society doesn't claim to be inspired, but it speaks with the same degree of authority as though it was and is, and they demand that they be taken at face value as though they are inspired, not even permitting people to question, or to have doubts or reservations about anything they teach. Then they beg off from responsibility

> when something has to be changed or corrected or some prophecy goes unfulfilled.

In place of "inspired" information, the publications regularly speak of the organization as uniquely possessing "*revealed*" truth. On this, Frye comments:

> The use of the term "revealed" as opposed to claiming inspiration is merely a matter of semantics—a distinction that represents no difference—and is only called upon to explain away changes, contradictions and disappointments. If you take the view that they are merely a group of religious men, sincere but not especially guided divinely, then their experiences make sense, because it illustrates the *human* factor—miscalculations and cultishness and so on. But, on the other hand, to argue that Jehovah is behind all of this, then it doesn't make sense.

The concept of "revealed truth" is employed repeatedly. If it is revealed, *who* revealed it? The claim is that *God* did. How then can it be anything other than inspired, infallible? The contrast, however, between the revelation of truth to the apostles and others in the first century as compared with the history of shifting, fluctuating teachings of the Watch Tower organization in modern times, is enormous.

The Office of Divine Prophet

By somewhat similar shading of expressions, the organization states that it does not make original prophecies, that it merely proclaims those already found in Scripture.[33] This, of course, is not in full harmony with the facts, since in the past it has published predictions centered on certain dates nowhere mentioned in Scripture. Nonetheless, this presentation enables it to claim *prophetic office* while at the same time exempting itself from the *responsibility and accountability* that rightly accompany that office. After quoting God's words to the rebellious people of Ezekiel's time that they would "certainly know also that a prophet himself happened to be in the midst of them," the book "*The Nations Shall Know that I Am Jehovah*," written by Fred Franz and published in 1971, makes these points (page 70):

33 The original Greek term for "prophesy" does have the basic sense of simply "to proclaim" or "tell forth" and may or may not include prediction.

> 33 Likewise it was a trying mission upon which the modern Ezekiel class was sent, to religious people of the same type as those in Ezekiel's day. But regardless of how Christendom views or regards this group of anointed witnesses of Jehovah, the time must come, and that shortly, when those making up Christendom will know that really a "prophet" of Jehovah was among them.

Later, on page 292, the book takes the matter much farther, saying:

> 36 None of us should want to be like these indecisive, unresponding ones! Better it is to know now, rather than too late, that there is an authentic prophetic class of Christians among us, and to accept and act upon the Bible message, "not as the word of men, but, just as it truthfully is, as the word of God." (1 Thessalonians 2:13) Concerning the message faithfully delivered by the Ezekiel class Jehovah positively states that it "must come true." He asseverates that those who wait undecided until it does "come true" "will also have to know that a prophet himself had proved to be in the midst of them." (Ezekiel 33:33) Such belated knowledge, however, will not mean salvation for them, for it will find their hearts and their ways to be unchanged.
>
> 37 What is to be gained by hesitating and doubting to the end that Jehovah can raise up and has raised up a genuine "prophet" within our generation? Certainly it will gain for no one the divine favor and protection needed during the speedily approaching "great tribulation" upon Christendom and the rest of Babylon the Great.

Thus, the "faithful and discreet slave class" is called the "Ezekiel class" (as also the "Jeremiah class," the "Elijah class"—used as applying to them for the period before and up to Judge Rutherford's death in 1942, and the "Elisha class"—considered as applying from and after that event).[34] The book says that Jehovah "has raised up a genuine 'prophet' within our generation." What servant of God would not feel compelled to heed the words of such a "genuine prophet" of God? In fact the quoted material

34 See the book "*Let Your Name Be Sanctified*," pages 334-337. The book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, page 166, speaks in similar vein of the "fiery judgment messages" proclaimed by Watch Tower representatives in the 1914-1918 period as being "foreshadowed by the prophetic work of Moses and Elijah." Despite this, those "fiery judgment messages" are today not deemed sufficiently important by the organization to maintain them even in print.

warns of dire results to any who hesitate and have doubts and therefore fail to accept what this "prophet" says.

Frequently quoted is the text at Amos 3:7, which reads:

> The Sovereign Lord Jehovah will not do a thing unless he has revealed his confidential matter to his servants the prophets.

What is there said of the prophets is arbitrarily transferred over to modern times, and Witnesses are told that the Scriptures' "prophetic meaning is made known to us through the 'faithful and discreet slave,' that group of anointed Christians whom the Master, Jesus, is using now," and that "Jehovah provides his loyal servants with advance knowledge about this system's end."[35]

Examples of this "advance knowledge" may be found in various *Watchtower* articles of the 1970s and 1980s (see footnote).[36] These utilize news reports current at the time as evidence that "events leading to [Babylon the Great's] destruction already are under way, . . . yes, *right now* [in 1980], events are taking place that are preparing the way for that execution" (with "militarized political powers," "radical elements of the U.N.," pointed to as the imminent destroyers), and that the "rumblings of that approaching confrontation are to be heard often in the news of the day." In support, quotations were made as to Communist hostility toward religion. This was a "persistent, *obvious* sign." The "dropping of the waters" of the river Euphrates that preceded ancient Babylon's destruction was said to be having a modern fulfillment through a dropping of people's support for the world's religions and particularly Christendom. The "overall trend" was stated to be "unmistakable" and, again, news items of the day were presented as "the writing on the wall" evidencing that this impending destruction would occur "very soon."

Now, in the 2000s, the world picture has altered dramatically, communist animosity to religion has dissipated (with the demise of—not world religion—but of communism itself seeming possible) and there is an indication of a resurgence of religious interest in a large section of the globe. Yet Witnesses were assured that the predictions made on the basis of then-current news reports were all evidences of God's revealing his "confidential matters" to a modern-day prophet organization and that all Witnesses had greater reason to go out boldly and confidently to proclaim this "advance knowledge" from God.

35 The *Watchtower*, July 1, 1984, pages 8, 9.
36 See the *Watchtower*, July 1, 1984, pages 9-12; October 15, 1980, pages 17-23; January 15, 1977, pages 40-44.

Anyone reading the Bible can see that God's prophets were never inspired to speak a mixture of truth and error, their statements needed no "later editions" that are corrected to wipe out or cover over false reasonings. Where then is there any true parallel?

The organization seeks to robe itself in the awesome role of a prophet of God and claim the deference that such a prophetic office merits. Yet it disclaims the responsibility for accuracy that goes with the office.

If confronted with God's words at Deuteronomy 18:20-22 about such prophetic accuracy, it presumes to set this aside as not applying to it in its role of a "genuine prophet," and "authentic prophet class." By what right does it do so? Does merely saying, "Well, we're all imperfect," excuse the organization from having that Biblical standard of a genuine prophet applied? It asks its adherents to disregard its past trail, which is strewn with unfulfilled predictions and now-rejected erroneous interpretations, and to continue to put near reverential trust in what it publishes, granting it the dignity and honor and credence due a prophet of God. Instead of feeling humbled by the clear evidence of its erratic, zigzagging course, it becomes more strident in its claims, more dogmatic as to its pronouncements. Is this the course of a "genuine prophet" of God?

Apostolic Authority

Apostolic power and authority are similarly self-assigned. On the one hand the organization rejects the Catholic teaching of "apostolic succession." Yet it asks its members to view it as if holding a similar position. The June 1, 1982, *Watchtower*, on page 17, in an article titled "Loyally Submitting to Theocratic Order," states:

> **Today, a remnant of this 'faithful slave' is still alive on earth. Their duties include receiving and passing on to all of Jehovah's earthly servants spiritual food at the proper time. They occupy a position similar to that of Paul and his colaborers when that apostle said of the wonderful truths God gives to his people: "It is to us God has revealed them through his spirit." (1 Corinthians 2:9, 10)**

The organization in the above statement claims that, as the apostle Paul received revelations from God, so it is with the "spiritual food" the organization through its Governing Body now pub-

lishes, that "It is to us God has revealed them through his spirit." What Christian would want to be guilty of rejecting divinely revealed information from the apostle Paul? Who, then, would want to be guilty of rejecting information from this organization that claims to fulfill a parallel function? With reasoning of this kind, what need is there to make open claims to infallibility or divine inspiration?

Similar to its describing itself as the "Jeremiah class," the "Ezekiel class," and the "Elijah and Elisha class" in attribution of prophetic office, the organization's 1988 publication *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!* regularly refers to the organization as "the John class" in attribution of an inferred apostolic office.[37] The office is equally a self-appointed one with no evidence of any divine assignment.[38]

Whoever Sees Us Sees the Heavenly Christ

On pages 23, 24, the same issue of the *Watchtower* last quoted further exalts the position of the organization in this way:

> 10 Since Christ Jesus is now the enthroned Leader and Commander of all fighters for truth and righteousness, we can unitedly 'learn from watching him' as the 300 learned from watching Gideon. (Judges 7:17) But how can we today 'watch' Christ, since he is invisible? We 'watch' him in the sense that we discern his signals as given through his visible "slave" appointee over all the earthly interests of his kingdom. (Matthew 24:45-47) Through this spirit-appointed channel his direction and strategy are communicated to all who are his "soldiers." These latter cannot afford to move ahead on their own or become impatient because their view of things is not coming to pass. The timing of matters is provided by our invisible Commander. His view is the important consideration, not our own personal views.

37 The October 1, 1967, *Watchtower*, page 592, urging submission to the visible organization, states that "we must be in full and complete agreement with every feature of its apostolic procedure and requirements."

38 As John R. Stott in his commentary on Galatians aptly puts it: "[The apostles] were personally chosen, called and commissioned by Jesus Christ, and authorized to teach in his name. . . . There can, therefore, be no apostolic succession, other than a loyalty to the apostolic doctrine of the New Testament. The apostles had no successors. In the nature of the case no-one could succeed them. They were unique." (John R. Stott, *Only One Way* [Intervarsity Press, Leicester/Downers Grove, 1968], page 13.)

The organization in this goes far beyond filling the role of prophet and apostle. It here claims that what people see in it is the same as observing the invisible Christ himself giving signals. In effect they parallel Jesus' words that "he that has seen me has seen the Father," for they clearly say that 'he that observes us is observing the Son.' (John 14:9)[39] Everyone knows what results to a soldier who fails to obey the orders and signals of his commanding officer. So who would think of disobeying the organization that one can look at as if looking at the Messianic "leader and commander" Jehovah foretold?[40] It seems nearly unbelievable that any could conceive of Jesus, as a commanding officer, sending directions in the form of the erratic, contradictory, shifting presentation of matters that has proceeded from the organization down through its history. But we are told that the view we get from that organization is the view of Christ himself, 'strategically timed' by him. If the organization becomes mired down by holding to a wrong position for decades, we are to stagnate with it; if it heads off in a wrong direction, we are to go off on a tangent with it. The words of Revelation 14:4, "These are the ones that keep following the Lamb no matter where he goes," in actual fact convert into "These are the ones that keep following the organization no matter where it goes."

Mediatorship and Priestly Intervention

Nor is even this the end. This and other articles urge that Witnesses' attitude toward the organization should be like that shown to Moses and to the priesthood of Israel. Articles compare any who differ with the organization to those who rebelled against these special appointees of God.[41] It seems not to matter that the Bible shows that Jesus Christ, not some group of men, is *alone* the Greater Moses, the foretold prophet like Moses to whom all must listen for salvation.[42] Nor is consideration given to the fact that He eliminated the division between a priestly class and a non-priestly class,

39 It is true that at Luke 10:16 Jesus says, "He that listens to you [plural] listens to me." Those words, however, were addressed to seventy disciples who were carrying the same gospel message he had preached, not some message of their own development. It is one thing to speak faithfully the words and message of Christ as preserved for us in the Scriptures. It is quite another to claim that, through some particular religious leadership acting as a governing body, Christ is now revealing things beyond what has there been written, claiming his backing for all the various rules, the predictions regarding certain dates, and the frequently changing interpretations of prophecies, applying these to certain periods or certain events in the organization's history. The ultimate effect is to make the Scriptures insufficient, incomplete, needing the organization to supply needed elements.

40 Isaiah 55:4.

41 See, for example, the *Watchtower*s of June 1, 1982, pages 17, 18, and September 1, 1982, page 13.

42 Acts 3:20-23.

so that no one needs the intercession of any priest other than the one great High Priest of God, Christ Jesus.[43]

The organization claims an analogy to Moses and the Aaronic priesthood, but the analogy proves untrue. It makes the claim but cannot produce the credentials. God made his selection of Moses as his mouthpiece and mediator clearly and undeniably evident to all by miraculous acts involved in Moses' selection and appointment; and God directly appointed the priesthood, accompanying its inauguration with divine acts of power to establish beyond doubt the validity of their appointment.[44] The Watch Tower organization is, by contrast, only self-assigned and self-authenticated as meriting the seat of unimpeachable authority it claims to hold.

When one considers that the organization attributes to itself the role of prophet, apostle, spokesman for God, priestly representative, chief communications officer for the King of Kings and Overseer of our souls, administrator of all Christ's interests on earth, director of all his household or congregation, it seems almost amusing—were it not so tragic—to read this paragraph in the June 1, 1982, *Watchtower* article on page 19:

> A mental attitude that must be guarded against is thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. (Romans 12:3) That could lead a Christian into believing that he has a special mission from God apart from the channel through which Jehovah dispenses his truths and directs his household. It would, in effect, place him in a supposed special relationship with Jehovah not enjoyed by any other brother or sister in the household. But that sort of isolation can lead only to folly: "One isolating himself will seek his own selfish longing; against all practical wisdom he will break forth."—Proverbs 18:1.

As has been earlier shown, in the final analysis the Governing Body is the real "organization," the "channel." All the things said of the "faithful and discreet slave class" and the authority attributed to it relate primarily to the small group of about a dozen men composing the Body. They are the ultimate beneficiaries of all this proclamation of importance of position and calls for submission.

43 1 Peter 2:7-9; Hebrews 3:1; 8:1; 10:19-22.

44 Exodus 4:1-9, 20, 21; 33:7-11; Leviticus 8:1-13; 9:22-24; Numbers 16:1-35; 17:1-10.

How Governing Body members, who, of all Witnesses hold a position so obviously exclusive, with prerogatives and powers that certainly imply a very "special relationship with Jehovah not enjoyed by any other brother or sister in the household," who act as the chief executive body, legislature, and supreme court for all congregations earthwide—how these men can allow such statements as were just quoted to be published without blushing is something I cannot comprehend. How could any group of persons possibly 'think more highly of themselves' than is evidenced by attributing to themselves all the exalted roles and authority just set forth? When analyzed, the paragraph just quoted is seen as in effect telling all the "rank and file" members, "How could you ever think that you could have a relationship with God equal to what *we* have?"

Living in Isolation

The material warns of the unbalancing effect of isolation. Of all Jehovah's Witnesses, no persons are more "isolated" from life as it is lived by ordinary persons, no persons are more vulnerable to an "ivory tower" syndrome; no persons are more protected from having their claims and decisions questioned, from having to face their questioners and answer directly and with proof; no persons are more detached from the problems and pressures of being family men, wage earners, home owners, ordinary congregation members, than are the small group of men forming the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses.[45] The rulings they make, often after only an hour or so of discussion, usually have little impact on their own lives but can have enormous effect on the lives of average Witnesses. They plainly take the position that they are beyond correction or instruction by anyone other than God and Christ. As the February 1, 1952, *Watchtower*, pages 79, 80, put it:

> Jehovah and Christ direct and correct the slave as needed, not we as individuals. If we do not see a point at first we should keep trying to grasp it, rather than opposing and rejecting it and presumptuously taking the position that we are more likely to be right than the discreet slave. We should meekly go along with the Lord's theocratic organization and wait for further clarification . . . .

45 Unlike the apostle Paul, none of them has done any secular work in decades, some of them in half a century. Only one (now deceased) had the experience of rearing a child.

They thus place themselves far above correction or instruction by ordinary fellow Christians, "by any brother or sister in the household." Yet they unblushingly warn *others* against the dangers of an isolated, self-important viewpoint! It seems almost ludicrous that—in articles so loaded with self-approval, self-praise and self-glorification—the organization can simultaneously accuse as prideful any who conscientiously believe that this praise and reverence given to men should rightly be given only to God and Christ, and who are appalled at the idea of humans assuming the seat of exalted superiority over fellow Christians that the organization self-assertively assigns to itself.

This is not to say that no others in the organization derive a certain degree of power from these claims. When the Governing Body, as the administrative part of the "faithful and discreet slave class," claims to speak for God and Christ, then clearly those who speak for it—as headquarters personnel who hold some administrative position, branch representatives, traveling overseers, even elders—all receive a sort of radiated aura of authority as well, placing them as distinct and in a special relationship to God (via the Governing Body) not enjoyed by the average Witness. Frequently these men are quick to remind any not responding to their direction that they represent the Governing Body and thus they 'make the weight of their authority felt.'[46]

It would be worthwhile to review the methods men in the second and third centuries employed to awe others with the importance of their superior position, superior relationship with God and Christ, as discussed in Chapter 3 of this publication. That review should make evident that the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses has not only gone as far as those early "bishops"—it has in many respects gone farther. Not until the arrival of the papacy can claims of such exclusive ecclesiastical authority be found to match those published in the *Watchtower* magazine. The claims of the papacy relate to authority vested in a single man; the claims of the Watch Tower organization relate to authority vested in a small group of men. The papacy presents itself as the "vicegerent of Christ on earth," in effect, the appointed manager or administrative deputy of Christ. The leadership of the Watch Tower organization does not use the term "vicegerent" but describes itself as the one and only "steward" whom Christ has, since 1919, assigned the "direction and

46 Matthew 20:25, *NEB*. See also quoted statements by Watch Tower representatives and former traveling overseers in pages 188, 189, 195, 196, 198-200, 212, 213.

administration of all his interests on earth." It is a distinction without a difference, for only the terminology differs. The claim is the same.

Coupled with the program of constant indoctrination, the ultimate effect of all this organizational posturing is intellectual intimidation. Witnesses are subtly made to feel that they should distrust their own thinking and judgment when they read the Bible, that they should distrust their own heart and its motivation, and that no matter how conscientiously they may seek to apply God's Word they should distrust their conscience as being a sound guide. Their trust should be in "the organization." They must march in lockstep with it. To follow the leading of Christ and of holy Spirit in any other direction would be to run ahead of God.

13

Argumentation and Manipulation

We have set our faces against all shameful secret practices, we use no clever tricks, no dishonest manipulations of the Word of God. We speak the plain truth and so commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.—2 Corinthians 4:2, *Phillips Modern English.*

EVEN IN view of all the evidence presented, I feel it would be a mistake to think that every one of Jehovah's Witnesses believes what he or she believes, and does what he or she does, entirely out of a conscious or subconscious sense of intimidation by authority. It would also be a mistake to think that all Witnesses seek to conform to the organization's programs of meetings and activity and to its standards of conduct and rules solely out of concern over peer pressure or threat of sanctions. That may be true of many, but not all.

Actually, any *conscious* sense of intimidation is often first realized when one begins to raise questions. Men in authority do not feel threatened by people who comply, but may feel so toward those who begin asking for reasons why. So while intellectual intimidation is clearly a strong factor, it is not necessarily the controlling factor with each individual. I am satisfied that there are numerous men and women who are where they are simply because they believe it is "the truth." I believe that was the overriding factor in my spending most of my adult life as a full-time representative of the Witness organization. I did what I did, and did it wholeheartedly, because I believed I had the truth, God's truth, and I am sure the same can be said for many others.

Since there are certainly many clear-thinking, intelligent persons within the organization, how is it that more questions are not raised? Undoubtedly here the intimidation factor does have some effect, and there is definitely a climate of fear existing today as to expressing doubts. But even if these are not expressed *vocally*, why do not more persons ask questions *within themselves*, in their own hearts and minds? In view of the evidence available, it may seem hard to believe that persons can so readily accept as "revealed

truth" the teachings of an organization with such a checkered record of reliability. While it is true that as Witnesses we were trained to discipline ourselves to accept without doubting, I think that this alone would not have sufficed for us to go along year by year in a course of almost total acceptance.

I do not consider myself a particularly gullible person. Although my parents were of this faith, it was not a case of my following dutifully in their path. In reality, on reaching the teenage years, I came to the point where I had stopped attending meetings completely. Then, in 1938, when I was sixteen, my father spoke to me very seriously about my lack of spirituality, my irreligious course, and asked me 'why I thought Jehovah would spare me at Armageddon when I was doing less than our churchgoing neighbors?' While I recognize that the thought of facing possible destruction by God for not being fully "in the truth" had some motivating effect, I know that this likewise was not the sole, or major, motivation. (I was probably more shaken by the fact that my own father viewed me as perhaps unworthy of God's favor and life than by the thought of any impending future destruction.) Simply put, after renewing my attendance at meetings I became convinced that what I was learning through the publications was the truth. Admittedly, the association with the congregation filled somewhat of a vacuum that had existed in my life, and the activity I began to engage in gave a sense of direction to my life. These things without question exerted an influence. Yet the fact is that I *did* believe it. The way in which the material was presented, the argumentation used, caused me to believe I was learning "the truth."[1] Today I ask myself, "How? Why?" That the argumentation was and is seriously flawed is clear to me. I do not feel any sense of credit for now discerning that. The evidence was there all along. So there is certainly no cause for pride when considering that it took me nearly forty years of my life to come to the realization of the error. The effect is decidedly more one of humiliation than exaltation. Others saw many of these flaws considerably before I did, simply through their study of Scripture.[2] They did not have the benefit of nine years of experience in the inner council of the organization, as I did. How then

1 This does not mean that I was fully convinced of all details, but what I did not see I took on faith.

2 I have in my library copies of a number of very old Watch Tower publications once owned by Percy Harding (referred to in Chapter 11). Many of them contain personal notes in which he shows that he discerned serious flaws in the reasoning and arguments presented—many decades before I began to arrive at that realization.

was I so convinced for so long? And how are millions of others, many of them clearly sensible, intelligent persons, similarly convinced?

Unless we are considerably more credulous than I think is the case, it seems evident that the argumentation employed is the product of considerable ability—an ability to present views in a quite plausible, seemingly rational way. Coupled with that, and perhaps the key to the whole matter, has been the *desire* to believe, *wanting* to believe.

It is normal for people to wish for certainty and the sense of security that certainty brings. The Watch Tower organization offers that, for whatever it says it presents as the right explanation of God's Word, the *only true explanation*, with no equivocation. It is normal for people to wish there were some source that could answer all their questions about God, his purposes, about life and human destiny. The organization offers to do that too, and to do it with confidence. It is normal to wish to know specifically *what* one should do to gain God's approval and *how* and *when* to do what He wants. The organization offers a very clearly outlined program of activity, with very definite rules of conduct, and the assurance that anyone holding loyally and submissively to these will be spiritually strong, joyful and win God's blessing. It does all this in a way that conveys a sense of intellectual appeal as opposed to emotionalism, the emotionalism that is found in many churches and religious revivals.

To believe that you are "in the Truth," that you are part of the one organization on earth that God is dealing with, a people of divine destiny, the only people on earth who really understand the Bible, brings for many the sense of security they seek. That was the feeling I had and it caused me to give myself without hesitancy to wholesouled service under the direction of the Witness leadership. I was an active part of a growing organization and I equated the organization's expansion with the spread of truth, life-giving truth. To work for the organization's expansion was to share in the battle against error, with the conquering power of truth bringing liberation to those held captive by religious falsehood.

It is a shaking experience to realize that this is not actually the case after so long a time, when you find yourself facing the seventh decade of your life. Yet others have realized it even later in life. In March, 1982, after the appearance of an article in *Time* magazine, a letter from a Witness came, addressed to Peter Gregerson, on whose property I was then living. It included these comments:

> I am writing to you hoping it will come to the attention of Brother Raymond Franz. I was deeply moved after reading the

> article in Time and his letter of appreciation later, which moved me to think we had something in common.[3]
>
> I was baptized in 1917 and was at Cedar Point in 1919 and 1922 and after this was preaching "Millions Now Living Will Never Die" all around Ohio. I am conscious of the fact that we all had a sort of built in fear thru the years that we should not question the Watch Tower. Lately it has come to pass that it's impossible to consider scripture in the *Watchtower* study and express an opinion without feeling you might be thrown out of the synagogue as an apostate.

The person writing, John Knight, was 93 years old. His association with the Watch Tower organization covered a span of over 75 years. As he wrote later, when seeing inconsistencies his initial reaction was to blame himself, asking himself if he were not just a "fault finder." He was disturbed by one of the same things that disturbed me: the dogmatism found in the Society's publications. He wrote:

> Like the Bereans I felt we should search the Scriptures to see if the things taught us are so. This has troubled me to no end as thru the years the position of the Watch Tower has been a total position. I hate to use the word infallible, but that is the view that many of the friends have, and indeed that is the position I found myself in, obliged to obey the Society's mandate. Now came the hard part when I could not find scriptures to support certain positions taken by the Watch Tower.[4]

John Knight's comments were typical of many received from persons in various countries—England, Sweden, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Brazil, Nigeria, New Zealand and other lands—many of those writing having a background of twenty, thirty, forty or more years as Witnesses. Remarkably, most of them had arrived at similar conclusions, privately, with no knowledge that others felt as they did.

Since truth is inseparably linked with freedom, it seems crucial that we make it our determination to analyze what we are told, what we read and hear, and weigh carefully the factualness of the things stated, and the validity of the argumentation used. Otherwise we may free ourselves of certain chains of error only to allow new chains of error to be fastened upon us. Recognizing particular methods of deceptive argumentation can help us in protecting our freedom of mind, heart and conscience.

3 The article appeared in the February 22, 1982 issue of *Time* and dealt primarily with my being excommunicated.

4 My wife and I visited and had personal conversation with John Knight on more than one occasion and he maintained communication right up until his death at the age of 96 (in accord with his request I conducted his funeral).

Recognizing Common Pitfalls of False Argumentation

> *Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.*—1 Corinthians 14:20, *New International Version.*

> *We must not be babies any longer, blown about and swung around by every wind of doctrine through the trickery of men with their ingenuity in inventing error.*—Ephesians 4:14, *An American Translation.*

There are honest and dishonest methods of argumentation, principled and unprincipled, genuine and artificial. We have already considered some of these, including the making of mere assertions, one-sided presentations (where contrary evidence is suppressed or ignored), use of ridicule toward those taking a contrary view, "pontificating" on the basis of claimed superior wisdom or superior authority. These are a few of the invalid methods used. Others include:

- Misrepresentation of opposing arguments, as by the use of a "straw man" in the place of the real point at issue.
- Use of "circular reasoning," in which an unproved premise is used as the starting point of an argument that proceeds to build on the premise rather than on established fact.
- False analogy, where similarities exist but not the kind needed to prove the conclusions argued for.
- Creation of a "false dilemma," which makes it appear that there are only two choices, the one being argued for and another that is usually undesirable—when in fact there may be several choices, several alternatives.
- The dragging of a "red herring" over the trail of the argument, that is, bringing in some point that is not relevant to the discussion and which only serves to divert the reader's attention from the weaknesses in the argument.
- *Ad hominem* (meaning "to the man") argument, which consists of an attack on the person argued against, instead of on his argument.
- Provincialism, that is, appealing to the tendency to identify closely with the thinking, belief—even the prejudices, bias or ignorance—of a particular group, and to see things largely from the standpoint of the in-group versus the out-group.[5]

5 In *Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric*, pages 54, 55, Howard Kahane of Bernard Baruch College states: "Provincialism often results in a false conception of the importance and moral quality of one's own group . . . In its extreme form, the fallacy of provincialism turns into a worse vice, the fallacy of ***loyalty***. This is the fallacy of believing (or disbelieving) in the face of great contrary evidence *because* of provincial loyalty."

•Misuse of deductive reasoning, either taking a broad principle and drawing unwarranted or unproved conclusions from it or, vice versa, using certain incidental facts and building on these to establish a broad principle that does not necessarily follow, hence, a hasty "generalization."

These kinds of argumentation often overlap or coalesce, the "red herring" may include an appeal to a "provincial" bias or consist of an *ad hominem* attack. But, however employed, the use of these various forms of argumentation can frequently produce material that appears very plausible, sometimes even impressive. And yet it is false. Intricate, winding reasoning may leave the reader feeling perplexed, and he may simply decide that the writer is far more intelligent than he is and that the material he finds confusing is actually very "deep." Perplexity translates into profundity, so that what is really superficial takes on an appearance of depth.

It was particularly as a result of Governing Body discussions that I came to realize how widespread the use of these methods of false argumentation was, how frequently they occurred in the various publications of the organization. Not that solid argumentation is completely absent, for that is not the case. But on crucial points—the teachings that create issues in the minds of many persons—I believe there is clear evidence that the Watch Tower publications have employed artificial and, all too often, deceptive reasoning, reasoning that manipulates the mind of the reader. This may not necessarily result from a conscious decision on the part of the writers. In many cases it is perhaps born of a subconscious realization that the proof is not as strong as one might wish, that the counter-arguments are strong. The writer is not only trying to convince his readers; he is also, perhaps without realizing it, trying to convince himself. The desire to be "loyal" to a particular teaching or position may cause the mind to develop reasoning that is not sound in order to shore up the position argued for. Belief that one is upholding the one and only true organization of God can serve to suppress or dull a sense of unease this might otherwise produce in him, and he may convince himself that the argument is valid. Regrettably, however, it is difficult to believe that *all* the flawed argumentation comes from such subconscious motivation; in some instances, at least, it appears deliberate, a case of intellectual dishonesty.

An entire book could be filled with examples of the above kinds of fallacious argumentation, taken from Watch Tower publications. A small number are considered here.

Attacking the Person instead of the Argument

We may recall that the *Awake!* magazine in an article on propaganda said:

> Tyranny of authority, ridicule, name-calling, smears, slurs, personal digs—all such tactics are marshalled to assail your mind and take it by storm... they resort to making assertions and they scoff at all who dare dispute them .... They prove neither their assertions nor their smears, but by the tyranny of authority they pontificate their opinions, squelch objections and intimidate opposers.

Such methods are condemned when practiced by political propagandists and evolutionists, yet the same tactics are resorted to in dealing with any who question the organization. Since many of those who find they cannot conscientiously support all of the organization's teachings have been exemplary persons, often longtime members and very active in congregational service, some reason must be supplied to Witnesses who have known them and their conduct so as to justify the harsh step of excommunication. This is accomplished by what amounts to a vilifying of them and their motives, denouncing them as "apostates," simply because they feel compelled to give greater respect to God's Word than to that of an organization. The motive of such ones is always presented as selfish, presumptuous, egocentric, born of a rebellious spirit, disrespectful and unappreciative of God and Christ. It would be difficult to imagine a clearer exercise of the tyranny of authority than that exemplified in the following quotations. And they represent but a fraction of the whole.

In a discussion of sectarianism, the 1988 publication *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, pages 44, 45, says:

> 14 From early days, the Christian congregation has had to contend with proud apostates, who by smooth, deceptive speech "cause divisions and occasions for stumbling contrary to the teaching" provided through Jehovah's channel. (Romans 16:17, 18) The apostle Paul warned of this threat in almost all his letters.* In modern times, when Jesus has restored the true congregation to its Christian purity and unity, the danger of sectarianism remains. Hence, any who may have become inclined to follow a breakaway group, thus forming a sect, should heed Jesus' next words: **"Therefore repent. If you**

do not, I am coming to you quickly, and I will war with them with the long sword of my mouth."—Revelation 2:16.

15 How does sectarianism get started? Perhaps a self-styled teacher sows doubts, disputing some Bible truth (such as our being in the last days), and so a splinter group breaks off and follows him. (2 Timothy 3:1; 2 Peter 3:3, 4) Or someone criticizes the way Jehovah is having his work done and appeals to a self-sparing spirit by claiming that it is neither Scriptural nor necessary to go from house to house with the Kingdom message. Sharing in such service after the example of Jesus and his apostles would keep these ones humble; yet, they prefer to split off and take it easy, perhaps only reading the Bible occasionally as a private group. (Matthew 10:7, 11-13; Acts 5:42; 20:20, 21) Such ones concoct their own ideas about the Memorial of Jesus' death, the Scriptural command to abstain from blood, celebration of holidays, and the use of tobacco. Moreover, they downgrade Jehovah's name; very soon they fall right back into the permissive ways of Babylon the Great. Even worse, some are moved by Satan to turn upon and 'beat their fellow slaves,' their onetime brothers.—Matthew 24:49; Acts 15:29; Revelation 17:5.

The material addresses none of the evidence, but focuses its entire effort in making *ad hominen* attacks. Any who disagree with the organizational leadership are "proud apostates." Their disagreement with certain Watch Tower interpretations and policy is labeled a 'criticism of the way Jehovah is having his work done,' when actually the issue is whether there is proof that it is Jehovah who is causing the organization to act as it does in a number of areas. The writer either falsifies or is ignorant of the true position of those he attacks. He represents them as 'disputing Bible truth that we are in the last days.' None of the persons I know who have withdrawn from the Watch Tower organization denies our being in the last days. What they do not believe is that *1914* marked the start of the last days. Thus the writer resorts to the use of half-truths. The writer never documents by evidence any of his allegations but

simply asserts them, never quotes from the opposing side, leaves his readers totally in the dark as to what their real reasons are for their positions. Any conscientious concern for truth is discounted as nonexistent, their motives are arbitrarily impugned and they are depicted as persons who appeal to a "self-sparing spirit," who prefer to "split off and take it easy," who "concoct their own ideas about the Memorial of Jesus' death" and other subjects, who "downgrade Jehovah's name," and who very soon "fall right back into the permissive way of Babylon the Great," or "even worse, some are moved by Satan to turn upon and 'beat their fellow slaves,' their onetime brothers." Thus the exhortation is given:

> 16 Any who waver because of apostate influence should be swift to heed Jesus' call to repent! Apostate propaganda must be rejected as the poison that it is! Its basis is envy and hatred, in contrast with the righteous, chaste and lovable truths that Jesus feeds to his congregation.

Consider now something written almost 90 years ago, back at the turn of the century. The writer in England describes what a religious system will do when its credentials are rejected, particularly if the rejection comes from one very familiar with them or is a person well-known in the system. He writes:

> . . . the ecclesiastical policy is to conceal a secession, if possible, and, when it is made public to represent it as dishonest and immoral. My own position would not for a moment be admitted as bona fide [taken in good faith]. The gentler of my colleagues seem to think that a "light" has been taken from me for some inscrutable reason, while others have circulated various hypotheses in explanation, such as pride of judgment, the inebriation of premature honours, etc.
>
> . . . secession means farewell to the past—farewell to whatever honour, whatever esteem and affection, may have been gained by a life of industry and merit. The decree . . . goes forth against the "apostate." He is excommunicated—cursed in this life and the next—and socially ostracized, if not slandered. The many, the great crowd of admirers, listen to every idle tale that is hatched against him; the few, whose moral and humane instincts are too deep to be thus perverted, can but offer a distant and stealthy sympathy. He is cast out to recommence life, socially and financially, in middle age; perhaps he is homeless, friendless and resourceless.
>
> . . . for the credit of the Church and the confusion of its enemies the seceder must be placed in as unfavourable a light as possible.

The writer was not one of Jehovah's Witnesses, though his words could easily have proceeded from one of them. The writer in this case, however, was the former Very Reverend Father Anthony of the Franciscan order (in which he had spent twelve years).[6] But what he wrote in 1903 describes in remarkable parallel what has been happening to persons within the Watch Tower movement in recent decades. In reading it I cannot but think of how perfectly everything said would fit the experience of Edward Dunlap and others I know in their treatment from the Watch Tower organization. The trend toward moderation and greater tolerance within the Catholic Church seems matched by an opposite trend within the Watch Tower organization, which has consistently (or perhaps one should say, inconsistently) denounced the authoritarianism of the Catholic hierarchy.

Bending Scripture to Fit Organizational History

The fallacy of **provincialism** is particularly evident in the organization's depicting itself as the central figure of various Bible prophecies. As but one example, the Watch Tower publications' constant reference to events of 1919 and 1922 (the time when the wrongly-based "Millions campaign" and its focus on 1925 was in full swing) shows how—by carefully developing certain features and incidents while ignoring others—events of a comparatively trivial nature occurring in a certain period of the past can be magnified to appear as of monumental significance, of world-shaking importance.

The book of Revelation (chapters 8 and 9) depicts the blowing of seven trumpets by God's angels, accompanied by dramatic destructive effects, and later (chapters 15 and 16) we find a vision of seven plagues and seven bowls of God's anger due to be poured out upon the earth. The striking effects of all these are presented as of earth-shaking consequence. According to the Watch Tower publications, these visions have been virtually fulfilled. How? Most notably by seven resolutions passed at seven conventions of Watch Tower adherents during the years 1922 to1928.[7] Yet today, none of those organizational pronouncements and events of the 1920s are known by the vast majority of Jehovah's Witnesses, much less by anyone in the rest of the world. I seriously doubt that any member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses would even attempt to explain in any detail the interpretation of the pouring out of these bowls and plagues and their supposed individual fulfillments. If questioned about the

6 *Twelve Years in a Monastery*, by Joseph McCabe, O.S.F., Watts & Company.
7 See *Babylon the Great Has Fallen!*, pages 530-575; "*Then Is Finished the Mystery of God*," pages 209-247; *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, pages 129-160.

fulfillment, they could answer only by reading it directly from a Watch Tower publication setting out the claimed interpretation.

Prophecies in the book of Daniel receive similar application. Daniel 8:13, 14 speaks of a "transgression causing desolation" that affects God's "holy place" or sanctuary, and goes on to say:

> Until two thousand three hundred evenings and mornings; and the holy place will certainly be brought into its right condition.

The book *Your Will Be Done on Earth* (pages 210 to 218) states that this period began on May 25, 1926 and ended on October 15, 1932. What happened on those dates? The first, in 1926, marked the start of a Watch Tower convention held in London, England, at which a Resolution was adopted condemning the League of Nations. Only one newspaper, the London *Daily News*, gave any coverage of the event. The book says (page 213) that the other "London newspapers hushed up the biggest, most important news of the times." Thus, the writer of the book manages to convert this simple lack of interest into something having an almost conspiratorial air. The ending date, October 15, 1932, is supposedly validated because a *Watch Tower* magazine bearing that date called for the elimination of "elective elders" in all congregations. (Actually, it resulted not only in ending the congregational electing of elders, but in the *complete elimination of elder bodies*, these being restored only some 40 years later in the 1970s; this elimination of elder bodies opened the way for the centralizing of all administrative authority in the Brooklyn headquarters.)[8]

The application of Bible prophecy to events that in many cases are essentially petty truly manifests a vivid imagination, but not discretion or faithful adherence to Scripture. It is a clear example of the fallacy of provincialism. The later rejection of so many of such claimed fulfillments of prophecy demonstrates this to be so.

Rewriting Scripture to Fit Organizational Claims

As but one example of obvious **circular reasoning**, consider what is done in the book *God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached*, scheduled for study a second time by Jehovah's

8 As has been noted, Rutherford justified this drastic action by depicting the "elective elders" as a class of persons who were uncooperative, were weak in, or were opposing, door-to-door activity, and similar charges. Few persons stop to think that men like Fred Franz and a host of others very prominent in the organization were themselves elective elders at that time. Nor is it ever mentioned that Rutherford himself did not engage in door-to-door activity.

Witnesses some years ago. In it, Jesus' parable of the "talents" is in effect *rewritten* to accommodate it to Watch Tower teachings.[9] The parable as Jesus gave it may be summed up as follows:

> A man about to travel abroad summons his slaves and commits to them his belongings, giving five talents to one, two to another, and one to a third.
>
> The first two use the talents to gain increase for their master, the third does not.
>
> After a long time the master returns and settles accounts with them, rewarding the two who gained increase, casting out the one who did not.

The above-mentioned book, however, presents what amounts to a *rewritten script* of this parable, one that adds features to it to make it fit the organization's teachings and history. This is the way Jesus' parable would read according to the Watch Tower's publication, with the altered points shown in italics:

> A man about to travel abroad, summons his slaves and commits to them his belongings, giving five talents to one, two to another, and one to a third.
>
> The first two use the talents to gain increase for their master, the third does not.
>
> After a long time the master returns. *He is going to settle accounts with his slaves, but before he can do so an enemy comes in and attacks them. The enemy strips those who had made gain, takes their money, and carries all of them into captivity. When they return from captivity, they tell their master that all the increase they had gained was taken away from them. He replies that he understands and that he will give them an extension of time during which they can gain some increase.*

If it seems hard to believe that an organization would actually "adjust" Scripture to that extent to fit its organizational interpretation, consider these statements as they appear directly in the book referred to, pages 231, 232. It first describes the Witnesses' supposed "captivity" period of 1918-1919. The book alters the description to make it sound more like a vicious "mugging" attack than a carrying of captives off to be bond servants. Without explaining why this different version is offered, the book then proceeds to the spring of 1919 (the time of the "release" from Babylon in other Watch Tower publications) and says

9 See Matthew 25:14-30.

> 43 Seemingly, these "slaves" of the Rightful Ruler of this earthly globe were stripped of everything. His "talents" committed to them seemed to have been wiped out. Their enemies rejoiced at having put those "slaves" out of the service of their heavenly Master for all time to come, for the ability of these to start all over again appeared to have been put in doubt.

In the following paragraph, the book describes the release of the Watch Tower officials from prison on March 25, 1919, and then raises a question:

> 45 The parable of the "talents" pictured that when the traveler returned from abroad he would settle accounts with them. This meant an inspection of them. Quite logically, with that turn of events in the spring of 1919, it would be the due time for the heavenly "master of those slaves" to inspect them. But what account could they render with respect to his "talents" that had been committed to the slave class?

In answer to the question, the book states:

> Any increase that they may have gained prior to the climax of wartime persecution in 1918 seemed to have been wiped out. They were as if they had no figurative "talents" in their possession at all. If, now, they were to show any increase in their Master's "talents," they must produce this increase in the postwar period and render such increase of his belongings to him in the future. They must be given a new and further opportunity to 'do business' with his precious "talents." This is just how it worked out historically, due to the merciful considerateness of their heavenly Master.

Note the way in which it is said that "seemingly" the master's slaves were stripped, their talents "seemed" to have been wiped out, that they were "as if" they had no talents to show their master. Either they *had* been stripped of them or they had not, which was it? Christ Jesus, after all, is described in prophecy as a judge who "will not judge by any mere appearance to his eyes," but who goes by the reality of matters, not by what "seems" to be the case.[10] So, if indeed, the slaves, in order to show any increase, "*must* produce this increase in the postwar period" and "*must* be given a new and further opportunity"—as the book tells us they must—it could only mean that the enemy did indeed strip their increase from them, not just "seemingly" so. The further opportunity is so that they can render increase to their master "in the *future*," which means that they render it *after* the inspection begins, not *at the time* of the inspection as stated in the parable.

10 Isaiah 11:2,3.

Again, the book does not clarify the basis for this strange explanation of the parable's fulfillment, this obvious embroidering of the account of what happened at the master's return, or the reasoning to support such a remarkably rewritten presentation of matters. It simply says that this is the way it was, the way it "must" be. It is not the way Jesus presented it, but that seems not to matter.

In reality, what the book does is make the scriptures conform to certain features of the organization's history, as if that history was dominant and determinative over scripture. Thus, the release from prison of the Watch Tower officials in the spring of 1919 is depicted as a sort of signal to Christ Jesus, letting him know that "logically" this would be "the due time" for him to begin his inspection (although according to the organization's teaching his "invisible return" had already been in effect for over four years, since 1914).

The Biblical parable of the talents itself says nothing of the two faithful slaves having lost (or being robbed of) the gain they had made, nor of the master's giving any "new and further opportunity" to any of his slaves. But the organization's explanation of its history requires that. It is necessary if the organization is going to harmonize its teachings and interpretations on other points. So it is said that this "must" have been the case, since this is "just how it worked out historically." This is a graphic example of the use of "circular reasoning."

The organization thus can not only determine how the scripture is to be applied (this being determined by its own experiences), but they are also capable of elaborating on the scripture, embroidering the account. When coming to realize that this was actually what was being done, not merely in this case but in others, I could not find it in myself to believe that God ever purposed that any man or group of men should have the right to handle his Word in such an arbitrary fashion, in effect to play with it as with a personal toy.

Likewise, I can find no justification for the way the organizational history is colored to suit any particular explanation being given at the moment. When claiming a prophetic parallel between the organization's 1918-19 situation and Israel's Babylonian captivity, its members are depicted as "unclean," "guilty of transgression," "selling themselves because of wrong practices." When shifting over to describe the same ones in relation to the parable of the "faithful and discreet slave," a very different picture is painted, as seen in the *Watchtower* of July 15, 1960 (page 436):

> 22 Now that the long-expected Kingdom had become an established reality in heaven, surely its growing interests in the earth after 1919 would not be left in the hands of a novice organization of spiritual babes. And that proved to be true. It was the 1900-year-old "faithful and discreet slave," the old Christian congregation, that was entrusted with this precious Kingdom service. Rich in its loyalty and integrity, long in its patient suffering of persecution, strong in its ancient faith in Jehovah's precious promises, confident in the leadership of its invisible Lord, Jesus Christ, obedient in its centuries-old commission to be witnesses in the earth, finally cleansed by a fiery test by 1918, the matured "slave" as represented by a remnant now stood ready for new assignments of service.

Despite all this glowing prose, the fact is that in 1919 this was an approximately 40-year-old organization, one that was not old but quite new. It was an organization that could show no relationship linking it with anything other than Second Adventism during the preceding nineteen centuries, one that had made numerous erroneous time predictions which were quietly wiped out of later editions of the publications, and one that, childlike, would keep on making more of the very same kind of mistakes, while leveling criticism at those who had the discernment to realize that these were indeed mistakes. Moreover, the organization's own publications present it as an organization fresh out of Babylonian captivity in 1919, a captivity resulting from its own transgressions and uncleanness. Yet it is here presented as the culmination, the epitome of a mature, tested and trustworthy, 1900-year-old faithful and discreet slave! This is clearly playing fast and loose with the facts. All the impressive qualities and age it attributes to itself have as their only basis its own *claims* about itself—a classic example of circular reasoning.

Circular reasoning is also seen in that, in any discussion of qualifying for divine approval and assignment of authority the organization itself chooses the standards and conditions for passing the test, standards and conditions that are all adapted to fit precisely whatever it had been doing at the time that might be considered distinctive. The result of the "test" at the time of Christ's supposed invisible return is thus totally geared in their favor, so that they cannot fail to appear as victors. When posing the question whether Christ as Master had, upon his claimed return, found them doing as he wished, the Society's book *God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached* (page 351) says:

> He must have found them so, according to the way the inspection, begun in 1919, has affected his decisions since.

What have been 'Christ's decisions' since 1919? Who is so privy to his dealings or so "in the know" as to what he has been deciding in the invisible spirit realm since that year to tell us? By what could only be divine revelation, the Watch Tower organization presumes to supply this information and let its readers know that his decisions have been such as to identify it itself positively as his approved channel. Thus the book unabashedly assures its readers that:

> . . . the eight-day general convention held at Cedar Point, Ohio, on September 1-8, 1919, was a notification to all the world [indicating] who it was that the returned Lord Jesus had found to be his 'faithful and discreet slave' class.[11]

Along with provincialism, all of this is an obvious form of circular reasoning which, in effect says, "we must have passed the test successfully and been chosen since our interpretations of Scripture, and the applications we make of these to ourselves, show that we must have passed the test successfully and were chosen." It is a case of supporting a claim by using that same claim as the foundation for the support, validating its revelation with its revelation.

Consider but one more of the notable examples of combined circular reasoning and provincialism. The March 1, 1981, *Watchtower* (page 27) contained an article on the "faithful and discreet slave" in support of the organization's interpretation of the parable and its application to the "anointed class" among Jehovah's Witnesses. At the conclusion of the article, this material followed:

> **OVERWHELMING CREDENTIALS**
>
> **The "faithful and discreet slave" has abundant credentials. Following is a partial list of Scriptural and prophetic designations applying to or being represented in the remnant of Jesus Christ's anointed followers since the notable year 1919:**
>
> (1) Noah's wife, Gen. 7:7; (2) angels sent to Lot, Gen. 19:15; (3) Rebekah, Gen. 24:64; (4) Joseph and Benjamin, Gen. 45:14; (5) gleanings left behind, Lev. 19:9; (6) two spies to Rahab, Josh. 2:4; (7) Barak, Judg. 4:14; (8) Jephthah, Judg. 11:34; (9) Naomi and Ruth, Ruth 2:2; (10) David's Israelite warriors, 2 Sam. 18:1; (11) Jehu, 2 Ki. 10:11, 15; (12) Mordecai and Esther, Esther 4:13; (13) Job, Job 42:10, 13; (14) King's daughter, Ps. 45:13; (15) men of loving-kindness, Ps. 50:5; (16) intimate group, Ps. 89:7; (17) Shear-jashub, Isa. 7:3; (18) light of the nations, Isa. 60:3; (19) big trees of righteousness, Isa. 61:3; (20) ministers of our God, Isa. 61:6; (21) cluster preserved, Isa. 65:8; (22) servants called by another name, Isa. 65:15; (23) men trembling at God's word, Isa. 66:5; (24) new nation born, Isa. 66:8; (25) Jeremiah, Jer. 1:10; (26) Jehovah's people in the new covenant, Jer. 31:33; (27) enduring watchman,

11 *God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached*, page 353.

> Ezek. 3:16-27; (28) man in linen, Ezek. 9:2; (29) cleansed people, Ezek. 36:29-32; (30) dwellers in center of earth, Ezek. 38:12; (31) the host of heaven, Dan. 8:10; (32) sanctuary restored (cleansed), Dan. 8:14; (33) they that are wise, Dan. 11:33; (34) the happy one who is keeping in expectation, Dan. 12:12; (35) all flesh receiving the spirit, Joel 2:28; (36) Jonah, Jon. 3:1-3; (37) apple of Jehovah's eye, Zech. 2:8; (38) liberated remnant, Zech. 2:7; (39) a Jew, Zech. 8:23; (40) sons of Levi, Mal. 3:3; (41) wheat, Matt. 13:25; (42) sons of the kingdom, Matt. 13:38; (43) workers for the vineyard, Matt. 20:1; (44) those invited to marriage feast, Matt. 22:3-14; (45) chosen ones, Matt. 24:22; (46) eagles, Matt. 24:28; (47) faithful and discreet slave, Matt. 24:45; (48) discreet virgins, Matt. 25:2; (49) brothers of the king, Matt. 25:40; (50) little flock of sheep, Luke 12:32; (51) beggar Lazarus, Luke 16:20; (52) sheep in "this fold," John 10:1-16; (53) branches of the vine, John 15:4; (54) royal palace of David, Acts 15:16; (55) heirs with Christ, Rom. 8:17; (56) the remnant, Rom. 11:5; (57) branches in the olive tree, Rom. 11:24; (58) holy ones or saints, 1 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 16:6; (59) temple, 1 Cor. 6:19; (60) new creation, 2 Cor. 5:17; (61) ambassadors for Christ, 2 Cor. 5:20; (62) congregation of God, Gal. 1:13; (63) part of Abraham's seed, Gal. 3:29; (64) Israel of God, Gal. 6:16; (65) body of Christ, Eph. 1:22, 23; (66) soldiers of Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. 2:3; (67) house under Christ, Heb. 3:6; (68) holy priesthood, 1 Pet. 2:5; (69) holy nation, 1 Pet. 2:9; (70) association of brothers, 1 Pet. 2:17; (71) seven congregations, Rev. 1:20; (72) twenty-four persons of advanced age, Rev. 4:4; (73) spiritual Israel, Rev. 7:4; (74) locusts, Rev. 9:3; (75) two witnesses, Rev. 11:3; (76) two olive trees, Rev. 11:4; (77) seed of the woman, Rev. 12:17; (78) New Jerusalem, Rev. 21:2; (79) the bride of Christ, Rev. 22:17; 19:7; (80) Jehovah's witnesses, Isa. 43:10. [12]

The truly "overwhelming" factor is that every single item in this list of "credentials" depends entirely on the Watch Tower organization's unique interpretation to make it a "credential." This is circular reasoning comparable to a man's saying, "I am the greatest person in all human history and I have the credentials to prove it. Just look at this long list of famous men and women of the past, and then read these writings of mine in which I have applied everything said about them to myself."

What normal person on reading, for example, the Biblical account in which the first person on this long list ("Noah's wife") appears would ever say, "Yes, that certainly is a credential identifying the anointed Witnesses of Jehovah since 1919 as the 'faithful and discreet slave'"—or, for that matter, any single one among the other 79 listings of persons (such as "angels sent to Lot," "Joseph and Benjamin," "two spies sent to Rahab," "intimate group," "Shearjashub," etc.) and things (such as "gleanings left behind," "light of the nations," "cluster preserved," etc.)? It is actually cynical—demeaning to persons' intelligence—to ask them to accept such arbitrary listings as "overwhelming credentials" for anything.

12 Note that the preparer of this list of "overwhelming credentials" follows the order of Bible books from Genesis to Revelation but then, at the very end, goes back to Isaiah 43:10 so as to put "Jehovah's Witnesses" there, thus giving the illusion that all the preceding listings were leading up to that culmination. This is pure manipulation.

And it is a measure of the degree of indoctrination achieved among its members that an organization can even publish such material as "credentials" without feeling deep personal embarrassment.

Relationship with God Only through an Organization

This concept, one stressed with mesmerizing frequency, is essential for the maintenance of the kind of nearly total control that is so notable among Jehovah's Witnesses. Again and again, Jehovah's Witnesses are reminded that God does not deal with individuals apart from an organization. Consider the kind of argumentation employed to nurture this view in the minds of Witnesses.

Note the first paragraph of an article on "Organization" appearing in the May 1, 1981, *Watchtower*:

> STRANGELY, in this highly intelligent age, many have given way to doubt as to whether God has an organization. Some hesitate, yes, now fear to use the expression "God's organization," because they have noted that their translation of the Bible does not use the word "organization" in connection with God or at all.

Recall, now, the points made in the August 22, 1978 *Awake!* magazine (page 4) about the power of propaganda (there applied to certain advocates of evolutionary beliefs):

> . . . even educated, sophisticated persons fall prey to a very unfair and untrue type of propaganda. This type assumes a superior air of dismissal of an opponent's viewpoint, treating it as rather pathetic and really not worth attention. . . . supposedly intelligent people who know nothing about the theory believe it because "all intelligent people believe it."

Compare those valid points with the *Watchtower* paragraph just mentioned. It begins by presenting it as "strange" that "in this highly intelligent age" anyone should be disinclined to think of God's family of heavenly and earthly sons in terms of an "organization"—the kind of organization that the Watch Tower Society advocates. If those words had appeared *after* evidence demonstrating that they had valid application, there could be no objection. But they are used *before* any such evidence, employed at the very onset of the discussion, and thus serve only one purpose: to bias the mind of the reader before the evidence is even considered. The

article then goes on to represent such persons as in "fear" of even using the expression "God's organization" simply because of its absence in the Scriptures. In this one paragraph we find examples of the use of a "**red herring**" to divert attention from the real issue and the substitution of a "**straw man**" for that true issue, combined with what amounts to an ***ad hominem*** attack, depicting anyone differing with the Watch Tower's viewpoint as some kind of anomaly in an intelligent age. This article, as also a *Watchtower* article preceding it, was based on a talk given by the president of the Watch Tower Society at the annual corporation meeting on October 1, 1980. (This was only a few months after the considerable upheaval that took place at the headquarters in the spring of that year, with the organization disfellowshiping certain staff members, including Edward Dunlap, a longtime and prominent member of the writing staff and former Registrar of the Watch Tower School of Gilead, as well as producing the Governing Body session that resulted in my resignation from that Body.) The president began his talk to the gathered corporation members by saying:

> Now, the word "organization" has been pointed out to us as not occurring in the inspired Holy Scriptures, the Bible. And you can consult any translation that you want, any of the modern translations, and you will find that that term "organization" is lacking. So, in view of that fact, why—what right have you and I to say that God has an organization? Now that's the big question that has been thrown up for discussion in recent months and it certainly deserves an answer, straightforward from the facts of the case.

A straightforward answer based on the facts of the case would indeed have been refreshing. The fact is, however, that the true issue, the big question in the minds of many of Jehovah's Witnesses was not the one the president presented. The one presented in his introduction amounts to a classic example of a "straw man." Neither I nor Edward Dunlap nor any of the others that I know were primarily or particularly concerned about the appearance or nonappearance of the word "organization" in the Bible. And that is not the concern of numerous other Witnesses or former Witnesses right now. They are not concerned about whether it is allowable or proper to use the term to describe God's arrangement for his servants in heaven and on earth. They do not challenge anyone's "right" to do so. What *does* concern them are the claims of all-embracing authority, of elevated superiority, and demands for unquestioning acceptance and submission, that are voiced by the

Brooklyn-based Watch Tower organization. They are concerned about the claim that Christ Jesus, the head of the congregation, purposed and has guided the development of a *highly structured organization with successive grades of authority positions*, leading through bodies of elders to circuit overseers, district overseers, branch committee members and terminating at the international seat of organizational authority, the Governing Body. They are concerned about the *Scriptural validity* of all these organizational claims, but particularly the claim that membership in, and subordination to, such organization is *an absolute essential* if one is to have a relationship with God and Christ.

Thus the question is not whether the mere term "organization" is good or bad in itself, acceptable or unacceptable. It is whether the Watch Tower's organizational *concept* and *approach* and *control* and *spirit* conform to the teachings of Christ Jesus and are representative of the Christian congregation as established in the first century. They may also be concerned about the close parallel they see between this authority structure, with its exceedingly strong emphasis on human authority, and the developments which religious history reveals as taking place during the second and third centuries of the Common Era, the period Watch Tower publications present as a time of initial apostasy from primitive Christianity.

To ignore this concern is to ignore the real "facts of the case," facts which the president's talk never faced, never answered, either straightforwardly or otherwise. By making the mere absence of the word "organization" in the Bible take on the appearance of being the fundamental question, the real issue was simply sidestepped. This is the setting up of a convenient "straw man" that is much easier to attack than the real points at issue.

The *Watchtower* article referred to follows the same path. It offers no proof that anyone is actually in "fear" of using the phrase "God's organization." It simply asserts it. It makes no acknowledgement that persons could possibly have weighed matters intelligently in the light of Scripture and have come to a courageous—not fearful—decision that they could not conscientiously go along with what they considered authoritarian practices, even though that decision meant facing painful difficulty. "Straw men" are much more easily dealt with than real persons and in the same way artificial issues are easier to argue against than genuine ones. Persons depicted as out of step with a "highly intelligent age" are less likely to be taken seriously compared with those presented as 'wise enough' to follow the organizational norms being advanced.

Few would want to accord any merit to the course of persons depicted as 'hesitant' and 'fearful' over a point of quite minor importance.

At the end of the same May 1, 1981 *Watchtower* magazine, a "Question from Readers" (also based on the president's talk at the annual corporation meeting) takes up this same issue, as can be seen here:

● Since the word "organization" does not occur in the Bible, even in its original languages, what right do we have to say that God has an organization or to speak of God's organization?

A modern Hebrew word for "organization" is the noun *ir·gun'*. It is drawn from the Hebrew verb *e·rag'*, which means "to arrange in line," as well as "to follow." Correspondingly, an organization is an arrangement of things. (For an example of this, one can refer to *"Things in Which It Is Impossible for God to Lie,"* chapter 17, paragraph 28, in the Hebrew edition.)

The Hebrew language has another word equivalent for "organization," namely, *histadruth'*. This word is based upon a word that is found in the original Hebrew Scriptures. The basic or key letters in the word *histadruth'* are *s* and *d* and *r*. With these three consonants is built up the Hebrew verb *sadar'*, which means, basically, "to arrange in order," thus producing an arrangement. The reflexive form of the verb *sadar'* serves as the basis for the noun *histadruth'*, which means "organization."

Although we do not find this word in the inspired Hebrew Scriptures, we do find the related Hebrew noun *seder* in Job 10:22. There this noun is used in the plural number, being spelled *s'darim'*. The *English Revised Version* renders Job 10:22 as follows: "A land of thick darkness, as darkness itself; A land of the shadow of death, without any order [*s'darim'*], And where the light is as darkness." (Also, *Authorized Version; Young's Literal Translation.*) The *New World Translation* here reads: "To the land of obscurity like gloom, of deep shadow and disorder [*lo s'darim'*], where it beams no more than gloom does." (Also, Rotherham's *The Emphasised Bible.*) Disorder, without any order, here would mean a lack of arrangement, a disorganized state.

To this day the Jews use the word *seder*. A seder is part of the Jewish Mishnah. Under the word "Mishna," M'Clintock and Strong's *Cyclopædia* says: "The Mishnah is divided into six parts (. . . , *Sedarim*, arrangements), which contain 62 treatises . . . and 514 chapters . . . The latter, again, are divided into numbered sections."

So in the original Hebrew Bible the word for "order" or "arrangement" is to be found. Emphasizing the needs for order and arrangement in the Christian congregation, the apostle Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth: "For God is not a God of confusion, but of peace; as in all the churches of the saints. But let all things be done decently and in order [Hebrew translations: *s'darim' n'khonim'*]." (1 Cor. 14: 33, 40, *English Revised Version; Authorized Version*) This apostolic counsel of the first century applies with equal force today to all congregations of the Christian witnesses of Jehovah. The apostle Paul wrote in the common Greek of the day, and the Greek word for "organization" is *or·gan'o·sis*. The root for this word is *er'gon*, a word meaning "work" that is found repeatedly in the Christian Greek Scriptures.

All things considered in the light of the Scriptures, it is straining the point to argue that God has no organization in view of the fact that the original words meaning "organization" in ancient languages do not occur in the inspired Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. In everything God demonstrates that he has the ability to organize. What would happen if he did not organize his obedient creatures? As a structure an organization is a body of intelligent persons who are brought together and arranged so as to work peacefully and harmoniously together in carrying out a common purpose, the purpose of the organizer.

In line with this fact, God is repeatedly called "Jehovah of armies." An army is an organized body of troops. So, in support of the truth that God has an organization, we read the following exhortation addressed to his organization: "Bless Jehovah, O you angels of his, mighty in power, carrying out his word, by listening to the voice of his word. Bless Jehovah, all you armies of his, you ministers of his, doing his will. Bless Jehovah, all you his works, in all places of his domination." (Ps. 103:20-22) Jehovah had an organization of heavenly spirit creatures before ever he created our earth and put man upon it.

Against various backgrounds God uses figures of speech to refer to his organization. The first case of this is in Genesis 3:15, where God speaks of his celestial spiritual organization as "the woman," in opposition to "the serpent," a figure of speech denoting Satan the Devil. (Compare Genesis 3:14; Revelation 12:9.) This rebel against God has imitated him and built up an organization against God's organization, God's figurative "woman."

Having started with a question implying that some persons were challenging the very "right" to speak of "God's organization," note the similar way the material distorts the issue in saying:

> All things considered in the light of the Scriptures, it is straining the point to argue that God has no organization in view of the fact that the original words meaning "organization" in ancient languages do not occur in the inspired Hebrew and Greek Scriptures.

This of course immediately casts those questioning organizational claims in a poor light, as people who 'strain at points.' Yet the very thing they are here said to do is presented in a totally different light in a statement in the July 15, 1957, issue of the *Watchtower*. An article titled "The Holy Spirit—Third Person of Trinity or God's Active Force?" contains this expression (page 431):

> If the holy spirit is equal with Jehovah God, as claimed by the Athanasian Creed, and if the trinity is the central teaching of the Christian religion, as claimed by *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, should we not expect these things to be plainly stated in so many words in the Bible? And should this not especially be the case in view of the fact that it is stated that the trinity teaching is "of all revealed truths" "the most impenetrable to reason," and yet salvation depends upon its acceptance? The fact that the Word of God does not explicitly mention, explain or teach a trinity is in itself strong proof that the trinity teaching is false.

There is an appeal to logic in the argument presented. Consistently, however, one could rephrase this *Watchtower* statement as follows:

> If the kind of highly structured organization found among Jehovah's Witnesses today is produced by Jehovah God, as claimed by the Governing Body, and if it is God's sole channel on earth, as claimed by the *Watchtower*, should we not expect these things to be plainly stated in so many words in the Bible? And should this not especially be the case in view of the fact that it is stated that to reject the organization's directives or its teachings is to rebel against God, and that salvation depends upon adherence and submission to that organization? The fact that the Word of God does not explicitly mention, explain or teach such kind of organization is in itself strong proof that the teaching about such an organization is false.

The argumentation is the same, parallel, founded on the same principles and premises. Evidently when used toward sources outside the organization it is acceptable; when applied within the organization it is not acceptable.

It is easy to be overwhelmed by the sheer number of words in lengthy explanations. Refer again to the "Questions from Readers" material and its first five paragraphs, covering the better part of a page. This material, forming the bulk of the reply to the "loaded"

question presented, is filled with technical explanations about Hebrew and Greek terms. It does little to clarify the issue but should impress the reader with the superior scholarly knowledge of the writer.[13] The reader, finding it hard to see just what the relevance of these points is, may well assume that this is due to his own inferior knowledge or education.[14] The effect is intellectual intimidation.

In reality, what is said in these complex five paragraphs could be simply and succinctly summarized thus:

> An organization is an orderly arrangement.
>
> Though there is a Hebrew word for "organization" it does not appear in the Bible, but the Hebrew word for "order" or "arrangement" does. (Job 10:22)
>
> There should be order and arrangement in the Christian congregation. (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40)
>
> There is a Greek word for "organization" but this does not appear in the Bible either, though the root from which it is drawn does appear often.

Granted, that is not very impressive, yet it puts in simple, understandable form what is actually said in all those intricately worded five paragraphs. Whether there should be order and arrangement in the Christian congregation was never at issue. The material sidesteps the true issue and does not provide evidence in support of the development of an ecclesiastical authority structure such as is found in the present-day organization of Jehovah's Witnesses—the genuine issue in question.

It is a good practice, then, to reduce any lengthy argument down to simply stated basic points, perhaps even list these on a paper if necessary to see if they really "stack up" to a valid argument. It is good to ask, not only what is explained but what is not explained. The material quoted, for example, does not explain why, in view of the acknowledged absence of the term "organization" in the Bible, the Watch Tower publications continually use it as the *term of choice*, why, in referring to the worldwide association of

13 The style is that of the Watch Tower's then-acting president.

14 The text from Job, chapter ten, verse 22, about "the land of obscurity like gloom, of deep shadow and disorder," will perhaps leave the reader groping for the obscure connection with "God's organization" under discussion.

Witnesses they do not prefer to give primary emphasis to terms the Bible *does* use, such as "congregation" or "household [of God]," "association of brothers," terms found in their own *New World Translation*, rather than lay such constant and heavy stress on the non-Biblical term "organization." Does not this indicate that the real issue is—not the mere use of a term—but organizational *authority* and its proper *extent*? The Biblical terms do not lend themselves well to the enormous stress laid on human authority.

At times a single word or phrase is inserted early in the presentation of an argument, one that actually represents a **value judgment**, a judgment that is not left to the reader to make on the basis of evidence, but which is made for him. As *Logic and Contemporary Rhetoric* (page 10) says, one word "can be used to slant the viewpoint of a whole article and put the reader into a frame of mind receptive to the writer's message. The fact that only one word was used to do the job makes it all the harder to detect the fallacy." In the *Watchtower* of February 15, 1989, for example, when discussing the account in Acts chapter fifteen and the visit of Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem to settle the issue of circumcision and law-keeping, the article (page 19) starts off by saying:

> The apostles and older men in Jerusalem (obviously recognized as a governing body in the early Christian congregation) carefully examined the spirit-inspired Scriptures and reviewed how holy spirit had directed things over the previous 13 years.

Notice the word "obviously." It represents a value judgment and serves one purpose: to condition the reader's mind in favor of the claim that follows. The fact that there was a council held *on a single occasion* at Jerusalem certainly does not prove that a "governing body," a centralized administrative group, functioned there. As has been shown in Chapter 3, the primary reason for Paul and Barnabas' going to Jerusalem was because the problem *originated* there. (See Acts 15:1, 2, 23, 24; compare Acts 21:15, 20.) In the paragraph preceding this quoted passage, reference is made to a "central teaching body" at Jerusalem. Again there is nothing in Scripture indicating that Jerusalem was the seat of any such "central teaching body." All of the Christian Scriptures with the exception of the letter of James (and, possibly, the gospel of Matthew) were evidently written elsewhere. There is nothing, not the slightest evidence that Paul, Peter, John or anyone else submitted

their writings to some "central teaching body" for approval or were in any way subject to the governance of such a body.

The initial article of the earlier-mentioned May 15, 1981 series on "Organization" contains a typical example of **suppression of unfavorable evidence**. On analysis, the overall effect and thrust of the material is a diminishing of the importance of a personal relationship with God and an elevation of the concept of organizational loyalty. The article is titled "Which Organization—Jehovah's or Satan's?" and its theme text is from Joshua 24:15. Notice how the material manipulates that text to fit the concept being developed:

> **"Choose for yourselves today whom you will serve."—Josh. 24:15.**
>
> TODAY the choice is between the two biggest organizations in existence. Historically, this is nothing new, but today the need for making the right choice is more urgent than ever before. Two thousand years ago a historical person, whose decision on the question would carry the greatest consequences for all the universe, was faced with the need to make such a choice.
>
> 2 Two witnesses to this fact, two searchers for the historical facts, namely, Matthew Levi, a former tax collector, and Luke, a physician, give us the testimony establishing the truth of it. The historical person upon whom the eyes of the whole universe were then focused was Jesus Christ of the Middle East. Matthew Levi tells us that Satan the Devil "showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and he said to him: 'All these things I will give you if you fall down and do an act of worship to me.'" Jesus did not dispute Satan's claim to the organized world, but he unhesitatingly rejected Satan's offer. (Matt. 4:8-10) Jesus refused to desert the organization to which he already belonged and make himself a part of Satan's organization.

The Bible text itself focuses on "*whom* you will serve," and the context shows that in Joshua's day the issue was loyalty to a PERSON, Jehovah God, choosing between Him and false gods. But the *Watchtower* article immediately begins:

> Today the choice is between the two biggest organizations in existence.

In a sort of intellectual "shell game," the person is subtly replaced by an organization as the crux of the issue. Then, in the second paragraph, Jesus is represented as having to choose between two opposing organizations as to his loyalty. Matthew 4:8-10, is cited in support. But only a fragment of these verses is quoted and none of the responses that Jesus gave to Satan are included. This is a case of suppression of unfavorable evidence, since in them Christ Jesus plainly showed that his concern was for loyalty, not to an organization, but to a PERSON, his heavenly Father, God. His responses were, as presented in the *New World Translation*:

> Man must live, not on bread alone, but on every utterance coming forth through Jehovah's mouth.
>
> Again it is written, "You must not put Jehovah your God to the test.
>
> It is written, "It is Jehovah your God you must worship and it is to him alone you must render sacred service.

How could anything be more *personal*? Despite this, the *Watchtower* paragraph concludes:

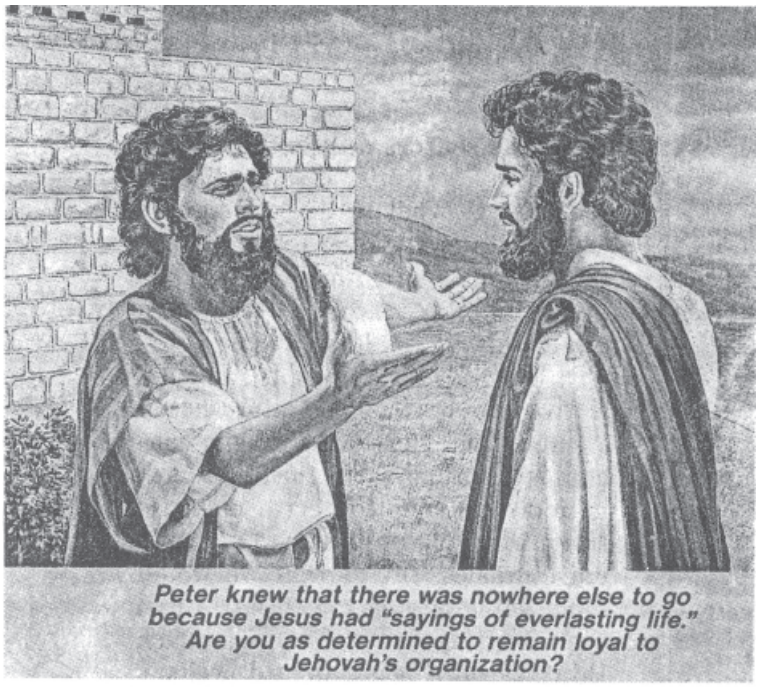
> Jesus refused to desert the organization to which he already belonged and make himself a part of Satan's organization.

By mere assertion, the organizational loyalty concept taught by the *Watchtower* supplants the very personal relationship with God found in the statements of Jesus Christ. There is not the slightest indication in the account that Christ thought in terms of an organization or viewed the matter as a question of organizational loyalty. His concern was for loyalty to the Person, God. In the *Watchtower* article we have a case of reading into the Scriptures something which is not there. One must indeed make a "choice" here, choosing by which source he will be guided.

It is remarkable how this constant emphasis on "organization" will cause Witnesses in general to read Biblical statements and almost automatically adjust them to fit the organizational concept. Thus, when Jesus said to his disciples, "You do not want to go also, do you?" Peter responded, "Lord, whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life."[15] Witnesses will consistently quote that text when speaking in favor of "staying with the

15 John 6:67, 68.

organization" and say, "where shall we go away to?" But Peter did not say "where," he said, "*whom* shall we go away to?" He did not express reliance on an organization for truth, but said "*you* [Jesus Christ] have sayings of everlasting life." But due to indoctrination the mind of Witnesses makes an automatic switch, replacing the person, God's Son, with "the organization." That the organization wants them to make this transference is evident from the caption under a picture in the March 15, 1988 *Watchtower* (page 18), which clearly equates loyalty to Christ with loyalty to itself.



From the March 15, 1988 *Watchtower*, page 18.

Paragraph 7 of the May 1, 1981 article here considered presents this example of flawed deductive reasoning:

> 7 There is no denying that Satan has a mighty organization with invisible and visible parts. Satan the Devil is a mimic for the purpose of deception, and the fact that <u>he has an organization argues, in effect, that his chief opponent, Jehovah God, also has an organization</u>. So Satan the imitator has deceived multitudes of people into thinking that they are accepting, adopting and joining the right and proper thing. (2 Cor. 11:13-15) Just call to

> mind Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares, or darnel, as an illustration of this. The early appearance of the tares, or darnel, was so much like that of the wheat that there was danger at that early stage of growth that, instead of the Devil-sown tare, or darnel, plantlets, the wheat plantlets might be uprooted. (Matt. 13:24-30, 36-43) Jesus explained that the tares, darnel, or weeds, pictured "the sons of the wicked one, and the enemy that sowed them is the Devil."

This is an unusual form of argumentation. It says in so many words that what Satan does is a guide for us to know what God does. It is true that the Scripture text cited shows that Satan presents himself as an "angel of light," so that in that sense he may said to mimic God's angels. But to use that one statement as a basis for assuming that whatever Satan does is necessarily in imitation of God is ***false deductive reasoning***, a ***hasty, unwarranted generalization***. Satan is also "the father of the lie," a murderer, the arch practicer of deception. Whom is he "mimicking" in this? Certainly not God.

In reality, the Scriptures show that Satan most often uses methods, not typical of, but *directly opposite* to God's. The antagonism of light versus darkness, of truth versus falsehood, of honesty versus deception, of love versus hate, of unselfishness versus greed, and of many other opposites, is vividly presented in Scripture. In view of that, how should we reasonably react to the claim regarding Satan's development of a 'mighty visible and invisible organization' as relates to the validity of a highly organized religious authority structure? Should it guide us or repel us? It is, indeed, a most unusual form of argumentation that points us to Satan's mode of operation as a means to teach us about the things of God.[16]

16 In the same article, on page 15, portions of issues of the *Watch Tower* back in 1883 and 1884 are reprinted, as though supporting the idea of a visible organization such as that which now exists among Jehovah's Witnesses. The word "organization" does appear a number of times in the quotations. But that is all. When examined, these quotations prove to be in reality a direct *contradiction* of the present-day organizational concept. That nineteenth-century material actually argues against any developing of a highly structured earthly religious organization and insists that there should only be a heavenly, *invisible* organization formed of Christ's congregation. As has been shown in Chapter 4, pages 70-77 of this book, the editor of the *Watch Tower*, Charles Taze Russell, was opposed to the formation of the very type of earthly, visible organizational structure that began to develop after his death. There is not the slightest reference to these facts in the article in question and the reader is led to believe that there is harmony between those century-old quotations and the modern-day concept of the Watch Tower organization. Adverse facts and information are suppressed, glossed over, manipulated or ignored.

Along the same line, an article titled "Jehovah's Organization Moves Ahead—Are You Moving With It?," published in the December 1, 1982, *Watchtower* begins thus:

> YOU cannot read the Christian Greek Scriptures without being impressed by the fact that Christians were organized for worship. In particular, they were organized to preach, to spread the good news of God's kingdom.

Anyone reading the Christian Greek Scriptures (or New Testament) would certainly be impressed with the fact that early Christians were *motivated* to worship and share the good news. But motivation and being "organized" are not the same thing. Today Jehovah's Witnesses have organized meetings, five a week, each with its organized program; they have organized semiannual circuit and annual district or regional assemblies, with their organized programs; they have organized "field witnessing" activity with organized "group witnessing," organized territory coverage, organized "magazine day" activity, a "Field Overseer" to organize this activity and keep watch on the reports of activity turned in each month by each Witness, and circuit and district overseers on organized weekly schedules with the prime responsibility of overseeing and promoting this organized congregational activity. Where does one find in the inspired Scriptures anything even remotely resembling such a systematized, institutionalized, programmed approach to worship and to the sharing of the good news?

In actuality, the *lack of any formal program* and the apparent *spontaneity* and *individual motivation* of the first-century Christians are what are most remarkable in the accounts we do find in the Bible. We find only the barest of suggestions of what their meetings were like and no indication of any methodology or systematization in their proclaiming of the good news.

I recall that during the years I served in circuit and district overseer activity I used to puzzle over this when preparing the "service talks" that were a regular feature of the weekly program when visiting congregations. I wanted to prepare talks that were Scriptural, but it seemed so difficult to find scriptures that even faintly reflected the kind of "organized service" urged by the headquarters in its publications. I found it hard to understand how the apostles Peter, Paul and John and the disciples James and Jude, could write entire letters to congregations and never say anything

stressing the need for the readers of those letters to get out and go from door to door, nothing about organized witnessing arrangements at scheduled times, about putting in more hours in the "field service" or similar approaches or topics, all things regularly stressed in the Watch Tower Society's publications. The letters of the apostles and disciples seemed deficient according to the viewpoint that had been developed in me.

It eventually became clear, after some decades, that the real problem lay with the viewpoint inculcated in me, a viewpoint that actually perverted the first-century record, manipulating it to make it say something it did not actually say. False deduction is employed. From the broad principle that all Christians should share the good news, deductions are made to support and cover virtually every aspect of the organization's systematized approach to worship and preaching. But those deductions are unjustified, as indicated by the absence of corroborative evidence in the Scriptures themselves. The systematized, highly programmed approach to Christianity that has developed bears greater resemblance to that of a large sales organization than to the first-century Christian congregation and its simple, uncomplicated approach to worship and service to God.

As has been shown, the strong organizational attitude developed has a definite molding influence on the thinking of Jehovah's Witnesses. Loyalty to the organization becomes the touchstone, the criterion, the "bottom line," when it comes to determining whether one is a faithful Christian or not. It is the absence in the inspired Word of God of that kind of *attitude* and *spirit*—not the absence of a mere word—that today causes many Witnesses to express serious concern.

The message of the Bible as a whole is against placing one's faith in any earthly organization or any group of men or a single man. To do so is to endanger the personal relationship with God that the Scriptures do inculcate. Reading the history of God's dealings with humankind one can see that God regularly dealt with *individuals*—Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job and a host of others.

It is probably in calling on examples in the Hebrew Scriptures for support of its organizational concept that the Watch Tower literature most frequently resorts to the fallacy of **false analogy**. We may remember that in this fallacy the analogy fails, not because there are no similarities whatsoever, but because they are not sufficient to give validity to the analogy. In reality, in many cases of Watch Tower application, the *similarities* are far outweighed by the *differences*.

The only actual example we have of an "organization," in the sense in which the term is used in Watch Tower literature, is with

the establishment of the nation of Israel. Whatever comparison may be made with the Christian congregation, it is clear that Christianity marked a notable break with the past, that God's dealings with his servants were placed on a new footing through Christ, in an eminently superior and distinctive way. The shadows have given way to the reality.[17] To try to establish the relationship of Christians to God and Christ on the basis of analogies with the Israelite national framework is no more proper than to equate Christ's sacrifice and what it accomplishes with the animal sacrifices made back then. The difference is far, far greater than the similarity.

Nothing illustrates more clearly that one's loyalty and one's trust in God cannot safely be bound with an organization than does the history of that nation. God established an official priesthood for the nation and, later, at the people's request he established a human kingship, though making plain that the people's petition for some visible sign of government was evidence of a lack of faith in Him, the true King.[18] Over a span of some five centuries, faithful kings were rare in Judah and completely lacking in the later northern kingdom of Israel. Out of some 24 Judean kings, the reigns of only six are described favorably in Scripture, and even these were tarnished with deviations from the divine will. Similarly, the priesthood provided no consistently reliable guide for the people, the priests frequently going along with the kings in their deviations from the divine will and thus contributing to the degeneration of the pure worship of God. It is little wonder that the psalmist admonishes:

> Do not put your trust in princes, in mortal men, who cannot save. When their spirit departs, they return to the ground; on that very day their plans come to nothing. Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD [Jehovah] his God.[19]

The history of those five centuries shows that, despite the existence of that national organization and its priesthood, Jehovah continued to deal with individuals and that more often than not, those individuals were persons clearly out of favor with what might be called the established "organization"

Jehovah dealt with David even when the head of the "organization," King Saul, made David an outcast from the organization. David chose to reside outside the boundaries of Israel for a time,

17 2 Corinthians 3:7-10; Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 9:7-11, 23.
18 1 Samuel 8:4-7; Isaiah 33:22.
19 Psalm 146:3-5, *NIV*.

at one point even finding it safer to live among the pagan Philistines at Gath; yet Jehovah continued to deal with him.[20] Aside from what David and Solomon wrote, most other scripture was written by men who either were not part of the established official organizational structure or who were at odds with it, viewed by it with disfavor—prophets whom God raised up and who neither got their assignment or instructions from some organizational "channel," nor submitted their speeches and writings to that structure for its stamp of approval. They openly expressed disharmony with the ones heading and guiding the organizational structure, both kings and high priests. Because of this these prophets were often viewed as subversive troublemakers for the congregation of Israel. They followed the counsel of Psalm 37 in "waiting on Jehovah" in that they did not resort to unrighteous acts or to violence in retaliation for the injustices they suffered, leaving it to God to execute his judgments on that national organization and its straying leaders. But such "waiting on Jehovah" was only in that sense, for they did not hold back from openly and publicly making known the "organization's" deviations from the Word of God. They felt no obligation to "go along" with the organizational structure and its officials in their erroneous course or to accept and support its misrepresentations of God's Word. Their loyalty to Jehovah and to his truth superseded loyalty to any earthly system, even one initially established by God, as was the nation of Israel.

Today most of Jehovah's Witnesses take virtual pride in supporting "the organization" no matter what it does or where it leads or what it teaches. In this they have no support from Scripture. In the national congregation of Israel, it was those who submissively followed the organizational officials (kings and priests) no matter what, who were the ones led into false worship, and their "loyalty" to that national organization's leaders caused them to accuse falsely and persecute men innocent of any wrongdoing.[21] They viewed such conscientious servants of Jehovah as "anti-establishment." Thus, their loyalty to an organization actually put them in opposition to God. This stands as a warning to us to this day.

Although the kingship had ceased, the official structure of the priesthood of Israel still operated in Jesus' day, its priests still functioning as filling the office of God's appointed representatives. Joined with them were the Jewish elders who helped compose the

20 1 Samuel 21:10.
21 Compare Hebrews 11:36-40; James 5:10, 11.

highest judicial court of the nation. How did this circumstance affect the course of God's Son, Christ Jesus? He followed a course and spoke in a way that brought upon him the disapproval and opposition of that authority structure and its most responsible members, including the very high priest himself. In reality, it was what might justly be called "the governing body" of the national organization, the chief priest and members of the Sanhedrin, that judged him adversely.[22] And it was to that "governing body" that the apostles later declared, "We must obey God as ruler rather than men."[23] The stand they took and the principle they voiced remain valid today. They are in direct conflict with the view of "going along" with an organization simply because it claims to speak for God.

To make organizational loyalty the criterion for judging anyone's Christianity is, then, clearly a perversion of Scripture. To urge, even to insist, that persons put *faith* in any earthly system, is totally without foundation in Scripture. Read the whole of those Scriptures and it is clear that what we are called on to do is to put faith in God, faith in his Son, faith in the Word of God as brought to us by those whom He inspired, but nowhere are we taught to put faith in men or in an earthly organization, unquestioningly following its lead. Such faith is misplaced and leads to grave consequences. The facts of history bear that out throughout all the centuries and our twentieth century is no exception. Far from encouraging such faith in imperfect men, the entire Bible record is a continual reminder of the danger inherent in that kind of trust.

Two Classes of Christians

> *One body there is, and one spirit, even as you were called in the one hope to which you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all persons, who is over all and through all and in all.*—Ephesians 4:4-6.

Argumentation is used in an unusual way to deprive persons among Jehovah's Witnesses of the relationship with God they should rightly have. This is by the teaching of a two-class arrangement for Christians, one class in a definitely more privileged relationship to

22 Matthew 26:57, 59.
23 Acts 5:27-29.

God than the other. The teaching ultimately serves to support the authority structure in effect within the organization and create a sense of dutiful submissiveness on the part of the membership. What is the essence of this teaching and what forms of argumentation are used to support it?

Among the precious promises made in Scripture as the share of all those turning to God in repentance and placing faith in the ransom sacrifice of his Son are these:

They are set free from slavery to sin and death, are justified or declared righteous in God's sight, their sins are fully forgiven by the atoning power of Christ's sacrifice. He acts as their Mediator and brings them into a covenant relationship with his Father, and they are fully reconciled to God and become part of his family, children of God, receiving sonship and the intimate relationship with God this connotes. Life everlasting is theirs, to be lost only if they lose their faith, since God's Son states:

> Most truly I say to you, He that hears my word and believes him that sent me has everlasting life, and he does not come into judgment but <u>has passed over from death to life</u>.[24]

Those are indeed grand promises and present a marvelous relationship with God and his Son. According to the Watch Tower Society's current teachings, however, those promises and that privileged relationship are today the portion of only some 8,600 persons on earth—the "anointed remnant" of the 144,000 chosen ones. They do not apply to the other four-million-plus persons among Jehovah's Witnesses.[25] Many of Jehovah's Witnesses are actually unaware of this fact, not realizing the full extent to which the official teachings of the organization go in this area. Some are frankly disturbed when faced with the fact that—though they themselves have listened to the good news of God, have believed it, have repented and put faith in God's provision of the ransom sacrifice through his Son—nonetheless, Christ Jesus is *not* their Mediator; they are not declared righteous and cannot be until the end of the "thousand-year reign of Christ"; hence their sins are *not* actually forgiven but, as it were, are held in abeyance; that they are *not* sons of God but only "prospective children," not becoming truly God's children until after the "thousand-year period of judgment" and the final test said to follow this. Moreover, they are told (tactfully of

24 John 5:24.

25 Nor do they apply to *any* of the five *billion* other persons on earth who are not Jehovah's Witnesses.

course) that the Christian Greek Scriptures or New Testament are written for the "anointed" and do not apply to these other four million persons except "by extension." This is because they are not part of the 8,600 or so "anointed" ones, those who are to reign with Christ in heaven and who alone partake of the bread and wine at the Lord's evening meal. These teachings have not gone completely unquestioned. Because of questions about the Scripturalness of this two-tier relationship of the "anointed" and the "other sheep" class, the organization has prepared a number of articles designed to strengthen belief in those points of the teaching that are most tenuous. The argumentation employed again merits attention.

The "Other Sheep"

The designation "other sheep," found at John 10:16, is part of the issue. Jesus' words there are:

> And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; those also I must bring, and they will listen to my voice, and they will become one flock, one shepherd.

The Watch Tower's teaching is that by this expression "other sheep" Jesus referred to those not part of the 144,000 "anointed" ones, to a class with an earthly destiny.

When I was talking with a respected member of the Branch Committee of a major European country, this text came up in the conversation. At the mere reference to it, and with no comment from me or any previous discussion of it, he immediately said: "That obviously applies to the Gentiles."

In one Governing Body session, this topic came up for discussion and I mentioned that I had heard several persons express themselves in line with the comment just quoted. After some discussion, the motion at the close was to hold to the traditional position. During the discussion, Ted Jaracz gave a notable example of circular reasoning by asking 'where the earthly class would appear in the parable if this expression did not apply to them?'[26] Just before the vote was called for, member Leo Greenlees said, "Doesn't it seem that we should at least allow for the *possibility* of the text's applying to the Gentiles?" But no such allowance was made.

26 Actually, as Jaracz well knows, the "earthly class" are consistently *excluded* in the Watch Tower publications from all Jesus' parables except this one and that of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-46).

Yet the parable clearly first describes Jesus' ministry to the Jewish people, those in the "sheep pen" of Israel, to which he came and from which he called forth those who proved to be "his sheep," those who knew his voice and followed it. Since he clearly first called his sheep from among the Jews, who would the "other sheep" logically be but those among the Gentiles who subsequently heard his voice, expressed through his apostles and disciples?[27]

The July 15, 1980, *Watchtower* (page 23) sought to dispel doubts about the traditional teaching on this subject, a teaching in effect since about 1921. Note the manner in which it introduces the opposing view that this text refers to the Gentiles, as those to be joined to the fold of Jewish Christians and with them become "one flock":

> **Churches of Christendom claim that the "fold" there spoken of by Jesus was to contain only Jewish Christians, whereas the "other sheep" are those who become Christians from among the non-Jews or Gentiles; and that both believing Jews and believing Gentiles become "one flock" under the "one shepherd" in the one spiritual fold. But this teaching disagrees with other Bible scriptures bearing on the subject.**

A "red herring" is immediately introduced by the attribution of this understanding of John 10:16 to "the churches of Christendom," as though these are the original source of the view that the "other sheep" in the text relates to the Gentiles. This has a very predictable effect on the minds of the Witness reader, one stimulating the bias of "provincialism." Since Christendom is viewed as a major part of "Babylon the Great," hence an anathema, the view is tarred from the start by such prejudice.[28]

Clear thinking should make plain that it is false reasoning to claim that simply because something is believed by such churches it automatically should be viewed as suspect, even automatically erroneous. Christendom, certainly a major part of it, likewise teaches that Christ is mankind's savior, that he died for mankind; most of Christendom's churches teach that God's Word is found in the Bible, that it provides divine guidance for mankind, points

27 John 10:1-16; compare John 1:11-13; Matthew 10:16; 15:24; 28:18-20; Acts 1:8.
28 This is also described in the field of logic as a "poisoning the well" tactic, in which an effort is made to discredit the source so as to make it appear that any evidence or argument from that source is not worthy of serious consideration.

the way to everlasting life. Does their being taught by Christendom's churches make such teachings wrong or suspect? The Watch Tower organization has never hesitated to quote from Bible dictionaries, Bible commentaries, lexicons and other such works that are the product of scholars within Christendom *whenever their statements can be used in support of the organization's teachings*.[29] Only when those statements run contrary to Watch Tower dogma is there the inconsistent type of appeal to bias exemplified in this article. The course of honesty is to recognize that an argument stands or falls on its own merit, irrespective of its source.

The attempt is soon made to place the reader on "the horns of a false dilemma," by saying that "this teaching disagrees with other Bible scriptures bearing on the subject." But this statement is mere assertion and is without foundation. Let us assume for the sake of argument that all the other teachings of the organization about the literalness of the number 144,000, about others outside that number being destined for life in an earthly paradise, about the sheep in the parable of the sheep and goats as relating to those who will live in the earthly paradise—let us assume that all this is correct. How does that in any way argue against Jesus' having referred to the Gentiles in the text under discussion, John 10:16? It simply does not.

Is it not true that the converts among the Gentiles did in fact become united with the Jewish Christians as one flock under one Shepherd? Whether the teachings of the organization about an earthly class are true or not would not change this fact in the least, would it? Since such 'listening to the voice of Jesus' by Gentiles and their being joined to the flock of Jewish Christians did actually occur, what prevents Jesus' illustration from applying in that way? What just reason is there for attempting to force a "confrontation" between such Biblical understanding and the teachings of the organization about an earthly class and an earthly paradise, when no such confrontation or opposition is required? If the argument were solid and rested on sound Scriptural evidence, there

29 As but one example, the January 15, 1991, *Watchtower* in just six pages (pages 10 to 15) quotes from **fifteen** sources in support of its position—all of them from "Christendom." Generally, when a quotation favorable to a Watch Tower position is employed, no attention is drawn to the fact that the source—whether a Bible dictionary or commentary or other religious work—is a product of what the *Watchtower* terms "apostate Christendom," and the author of the favorable material is either simply named or is designated, not as a representative of "Babylon the Great," but as "a Biblical scholar" or similar term.

would be no need for the writer of the article to resort to the use of a false dilemma. The *Watchtower*'s argumentation is neither fair nor factual.

The following paragraph suggests to the reader what John "could well have called to mind" when writing down Jesus' words. Having referred to the parable of the sheep and goats at Matthew 25, it says:

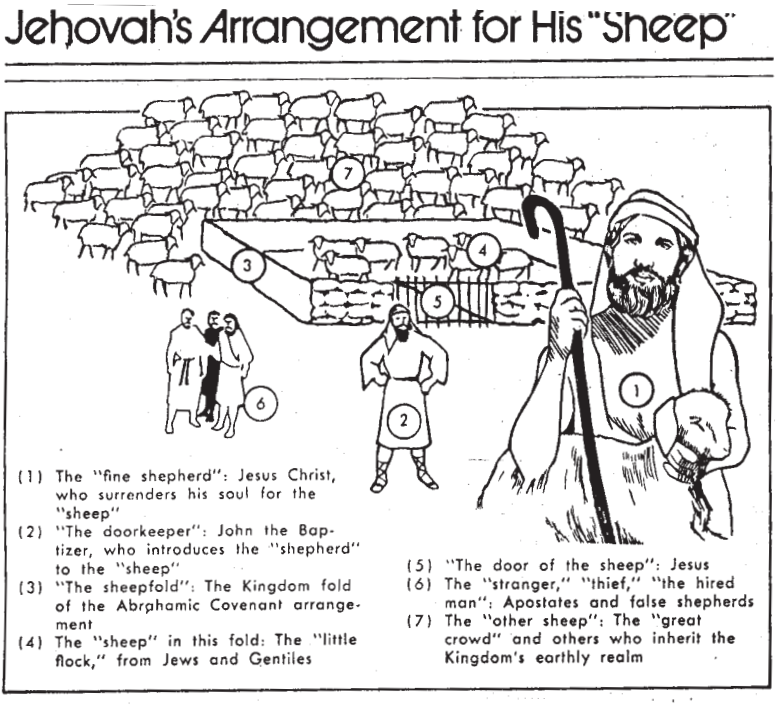
> 7 The apostle John was acquainted with that parable, for he and his brother James and also Peter and Andrew were the ones who promoted Jesus' prophecy by asking him privately about the "sign," and John heard that prophecy in full. (Mark 13:3, 4) So when he recorded Jesus' words about the "other sheep" he could well have called to mind Jesus' parable about the sheep and the goats. He was the aged apostle who was given the Revelation that disclosed that the 12 tribes of spiritual Israel would contain only 144,000 members. So he knew that the "sheepfold" containing the "little flock" would enfold only a limited number of all those saved.[30]

This attempt by the writer of the article at what amounts to mind-reading proves nothing; it is also pointless, since the words at John 10:16, did not originate with *John's* thinking but with that of *Jesus*. The statement also *presumes* that John understood the 144,000 in Revelation as the Watch Tower organization understands it. Once again, the writer argues by use of circular reasoning.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the articles is the picture drawn to portray in graphic form the Watch Tower interpretation of the text, as shown on the following page

Although this is, admittedly, only an artist's sketch, the *concept* the scene conveys, designed to harmonize with the organization's teaching, is almost incredible.

30 The *Watchtower*, July 15, 1980, page 23.



Here is depicted an Israelite shepherd with *seven* sheep (by count) protected in a pen and *fifty* others (by count) left loose outside and without the protection of the pen. What shepherd in any time of history, in any race, in any country of the world, would have such an arrangement of his sheep? What shepherd would gain "other sheep" in large numbers and leave them disconnected, walled off from his existing flock, milling around outside the sheepfold? Even if it were a case of two distinct breeds of different quality or type of wool, the shepherd would still at least provide a sheep pen for the added breed. But are there really two "breeds" of Christians in any sense that would make for the unequal treatment depicted in the *Watchtower* picture?

Notably, the artist chose a ratio of about 7 sheep outside to every one inside. If the ratio were based on the more than 4,000,000 Witnesses now supposedly of the "other sheep" class as compared with the total of 144,000 of the so-called "little flock" the ratio would actually be closer to 28 to 1. That would mean that if 7 sheep are depicted inside the pen, there would be 196 outside, which would make the scene all the more incredible.

In the first century, at Pentecost 3,000 persons were baptized. Later the account refers to "five thousand *men*" as among those accepting

the good news.[31] In the years that followed, not only was there further growth in Jerusalem, but congregations of believers developed throughout the then known world, and historical evidence indicates that the number of those embracing the good news reached into the many tens, even hundreds, of thousands.[32] Even if we were to *assume* that the greater number did not prove faithful, still it is difficult to believe that there were not at the very least thousands who did. Since the *Watchtower* magazine began to be published in 1879, more tens of thousands have professed to be anointed followers of Christ and the *Watchtower* certainly implies that many of these proved faithful. For the purpose of illustration, if we were to accept a very conservative figure of 10,000 proving faithful to death during the course of the first century, and another 10,000 from 1879 onward, that would leave (according to Watch Tower doctrine) 124,000 others to be approved—during the intervening period—as heavenly heirs. Consider what that would mean. It would mean that during the ensuing 1,779 years before the Watch Tower organization comes on the scene, Christ Jesus, who was directing his followers in accord with his words at Matthew 28:20, only saw an average of 70 persons a year—*in the whole world*—become faithful and approved followers of his![33] Surely it strains belief to think that such paltry results would come from Jesus' direction of his disciples, and it is demeaning to the power of the good news and the power of God's holy Spirit.

Despite all the intricate argumentation, it seems evident that a true Christian is a true Christian. The inspired Scriptures themselves plainly know and present no other kind. *All* who hear the good shepherd's voice are called on to show the same kind of faith and love, the same fruitage of God's Spirit, enjoying the same relationship with Him as sons. Two differing kinds of Christian "sheep" is the product of human invention.

Right within the Bible we find a passage that remarkably parallels that of John 10:16, namely what the apostle Paul wrote at Ephesians 2:11-18. There, in place of two groups of sheep, the apostle refers to two peoples, Jews and Gentiles, and says, according to the *New World Translation*:

> Therefore keep bearing in mind that formerly you were people of the nations as to the flesh: "uncircumcision" you were called by that which is called "circumcision" made in the flesh with hands—

31 Acts 2:41; 4:4.
32 Compare Acts 6:1, 7; 8:1, 4, 5, 14; 13:44, 48, 49; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8.
33 This figure results from dividing 124,000 by 1,779 (years).

> that you were at that particular time without Christ, alienated from the state of Israel and strangers to the covenants of the promise, and you had no hope and were without God in the world. But now in union with Christ Jesus you who were once far off have come to be near by the blood of the Christ. For he is our peace, he who made the two parties one and destroyed the wall in between that fenced them off. By means of his flesh he abolished the enmity, the Law of commandments consisting in decrees, that he might create the two peoples in union with himself into one new man and make peace; and that he might fully reconcile both peoples in one body to God through the torture stake, because he had killed off the enmity by means of himself. And he came and declared the good news of peace to you, the ones far off, and peace to those near, because through him we, both peoples, have the approach to the Father by one spirit.

All the elements found in John 10:16, are found here. Though it uses a different analogy from that of sheep, it says the same thing, presents the same picture. It shows that, in addition to the Jewish believers (or sheep) the Gentile believers (or sheep) heard the good news (the voice of the shepherd, Christ), and through Christ the two peoples were made into one body (or one flock), under him as their head (their one shepherd).

To say, then, that understanding the "other sheep" in John 10:16, as relating to the Gentile believers, "disagrees with other Bible scriptures bearing on the subject" is exactly opposite to the facts. That understanding is totally harmonious, not only with Paul's statement just quoted, but with all the rest of the Scriptures. From the time of God's promise to Abraham forward, the Scriptures continually pointed forward to and prophesied of the time when God would join people of all nations into one people, his people under his Messiah.[34] Seen against that background Jesus' statement is easily understood, with no complicated, intricate arguments needed to explain it. Rather than being in 'disharmony with scriptures bearing on the subject,' in view of all the prophecies pointing to this, it would be most unusual if Jesus had *not* given a parable illustrating the entry of Gentiles into unity with Jewish believers.

Another designation used for the claimed secondary class of Christians is that of the "great crowd," a term drawn from Revelation 7:9-17. For a consideration of this subject, the reader is referred to the Appendix.

34 Genesis 12:3; 22:18; 28:14; Psalm 72:17; Isaiah 19:23-25; Amos 9:11, 12; Acts 15:15-18; Galatians 3:8.

Shifting Winds of Doctrine

> *We are not meant to remain as children at the mercy of every chance wind of teaching, and of the jockeying of men.*—Ephesians 4:14, *Phillips Modern English.*

Truth is consistent with itself and is therefore something stable and reliable. A major sign of fallacious argumentation therefore is inconsistency, particularly if the inconsistency in a later position as compared with an earlier one is not openly acknowledged or is made to appear as something other that what it actually is—the correction of an error.

This is the case with the Watch Tower organization's effort to create a sense of "urgency" based on the claim to know that the "final end" is due to occur within a particular time period. *Crisis of Conscience* documents the way in which a whole series of dates was eventually discarded, and the predictions tied to these dates were transferred to another, later, series of dates.[35] The evidence is also there presented showing the manner in which Watch Tower predictions relating to 1914, 1918, 1920, 1925, the early 1940s, and finally 1975, all proved without substance. One *Watchtower* issue endeavored to justify all this and at the same time place its readers on the defensive in this matter. In its December 1, 1984, issue, several articles on "Christian Watchfulness" highlighted the many Scriptural exhortations to "keep on the watch" as regards Christ's promised return and then related historical evidence of a general relaxation of spiritual alertness, both in the past and in the present. The article proceeded to justify the strong emphasis on chronological calculations to determine the nearness of the end as practiced by the Watch Tower organization by essentially saying that "It is better to be wrong by such miscalculations than to be spiritually drowsy and apathetic about Christ's coming." The whole thrust of the series of articles is to make it appear that unless one thinks in terms of some particular time period and focuses strong attention on visible conditions as a sign, he falls automatically into the other camp, that of the spiritually apathetic who have lost interest in Christ's return.

The material exemplifies many forms of false reasoning. Much of the justification for the Watch Tower's wrong expectations is based on the fact that others in the past, including servants of God

35 See *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 175-184, 237, 238.

in pre-Christian and Christian times, also had wrong ideas about the time for God to act in certain areas of his purpose. This is a variation of the reasoning that "two wrongs make a right," namely, that "common practice" somehow provides justification for what one does. Actually, if the Watch Tower Society is aware of the errors of the past on the part of persons attempting to fix a time period for the end to occur, this makes them not *less* but *more responsible* for making misleading predictions. They should have demonstrated that they had learned something from such examples of wrong thinking and should have held back from following in the same mistaken path. The saying is that, "Experience is a hard school, but fools will learn in no other," and a "faithful and discreet slave" should not be in that class. Men in the Bible committed all sorts of mistakes and the record of these serves as "warnings to us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come," *not as any justification for making similar mistakes*.[36]

Mainly, however, the articles would place readers on the horns of a false dilemma. They endeavor to create the idea that either a person follows the course of the Watch Tower organization in fixing a certain time frame for the end's coming, utilizing chronological calculations and assessments of certain world conditions to do so, or else he or she falls into the class of those who simply don't care when Christ comes, who are apathetic, sluggish and probably "apostate." The fact is, however, that one is not faced with just these two options and need not place himself or herself in either of these classes. Christ Jesus foretold those who would come saying, "The due time has approached," and said of these, "Do not go after them."[37] Neither Christ Jesus nor his apostles encouraged in any way the use of chronological calculations to determine the time frame for his return. To the contrary, Christ's urgings to "keep on the watch" contained in their context an equal stressing of the fact that it was impossible for his followers to foreknow or predict the time of the Master's return. That very fact of the *uncertainty* and *unexpectedness* of the time was what actually made watchfulness so critical.[38]

This rules against the view that 'being watchful' meant watching the news media or other sources for some visible evidence—in the form of world events or conditions—that Christ's return was

36 1 Corinthians 10:11, *NIV*.
37 Luke 21:8.
38 Compare Matthew 24:42-44; 25:13; Mark 13:33-37; Luke 12:40.

about to take place and that the "end was at hand." His own words show that his followers were watchful in being on guard against the attractions of a materialistic world, the distracting anxieties of life, and hence manifesting a steady and diligent concern for maintaining spiritual strength and health, and above all for maintaining a right relationship with God and Christ, so that when, without any previous warning, the time of judgment did break, they might be found "standing before the Son of man" as approved persons.[39] Peter, also, in discussing God's day of judgment makes clear that the evidence of one's keeping that time "close in mind" is by "holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion," not by putting faith in chronological speculation or becoming excited about certain world events or conditions.[40] As Christians, they should never lose from sight that such time of judgment is certain, unavoidable, should let that consciousness guide them in all their decisions and course of action, thus living each day as if it might be the day in which that time of settling accounts will come.

At one point the *Watchtower* article (page 18) states: "Have apostates who claim that 'the last days' began at Pentecost and cover the entire Christian Era promoted Christian alertness? Have they not, rather, induced spiritual sleepiness?" No evidence is advanced to show that that understanding of the "last days" must result or has resulted in such "spiritual sleepiness," and a reduction of "Christian alertness." A question the articles never address is *what the evidence shows as to the effect of the* Watchtower's *numerous false predictions*. Have these—and similar predictions by other religious groups—actually strengthened people's confidence in the Bible promises regarding Christ's return? Have they enhanced appreciation of the Scriptures or have they served to make these appear as a source of false expectations?

Under the heading, "Disappointments Can Weaken Faith," the April 15, 1990, *Watchtower* states (page 27):

> **Adult Christians too can be disappointed, and this has in some cases led to spiritual disaster. Some set their hope on a date when they were sure Armageddon would come. When nothing happened on that day, they felt let down.**

39 Luke 21:36.
40 2 Peter 3:10-12.

This is undoubtedly an allusion to expectations held by Witnesses about the year 1975. Where did those expectations have their source? What caused them to be excited? Was it of those subsequently disappointed persons' own origination? The article never points out that the disappointment which "in some cases led to spiritual disaster" resulted from expectations aroused and stimulated by the Watch Tower organization itself. Illustrating how strongly the matter was pushed, in a convention report on the "Peace on Earth" International Assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses held in 1969, after referring to the approach of a new millennium in the year 2001, the publication, as seen in this photocopy, stated (page 11):

> But for God-fearing students of the Holy Bible containing both the ancient Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Greek Scriptures, there is a more important millennium that compels their attention. That is the seventh millennium! No not the seventh millennium measured from A.D. 1, but the seventh millennium of man's existence here on earth, the seventh millennium measured from God's creation of perfect man and woman in the garden of Eden. This is usually measured according to the Anno Mundi rule or "In the Year of the World" calendar, the world of mankind being here meant.
>
> Does this fact have any bearing on the approach of the peace of a thousand years or of a millennium? Very apparently Yes!

As all Witnesses already knew, three years earlier (in 1966) the Watch Tower Society had identified the year 1975 as the date of the beginning of the seventh millennium of mankind's history.[41] What significance was given to this calculation? The 1969 material continues (page 12) saying:

> More recently earnest researchers of the Holy Bible have made a recheck of its chronology. According to their calculations the six millenniums of mankind's life on earth would end in the mid-seventies. Thus the seventh millennium from man's creation by Jehovah God would begin within less than ten years.

41 See the documentation presented in *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 198-209.

> In order for the Lord Jesus Christ to be "Lord even of the sabbath day," his thousand-year reign would have to be the seventh in a series of thousand-year periods or millenniums. (Matthew 12:8, *AV*) Thus it would be a sabbatic reign. Since early in the existence of mankind Satan the Devil has been on the loose, making the human family to toil in hard bondage, causing the earth to be filled with violence before the global flood of Noah's day and inducing the same old earth to be filled with even greater violence today. Soon now six millenniums of his wicked exploiting of mankind as his slaves will end, within the lifetime of the generation that has witnessed world events since the close of the Gentile Times in 1914 till now, according to the prophetic words of Jesus in Matthew 24:34. Would not, then, the end of six millenniums of mankind's laborious enslavement under Satan the Devil be the fitting time for Jehovah God to usher in a Sabbath millennium for all his human creatures? Yes, indeed! And his King Jesus Christ will be Lord of that Sabbath.

The fundamental responsibility for all the excitement and all the disappointed expectations connected with the year 1975 rests at the door of the Watch Tower organization. As documented in *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 237-253, the damaging effect of the disappointment was clearly evident, stated even in memos from responsible members of their own headquarters staff. Yet the Governing Body resisted acknowledging that responsibility for nearly four years. Their own records show that it resulted in an artificial "spiritual alertness" on the part of hundreds of thousands, and that their apparent "alertness" ended as soon as the expectations failed with the passing of that year more than a decade and a half ago. Did those hundreds of thousands who flocked into the organization as a result of such false signal *benefit* from being thus disillusioned? Did it enhance their confidence in the reliability of the Scriptures? There is little reason to think so. The foundation for that apparent "spiritual alertness" was built on the shifting sands of human speculation and cannot be compared with the genuine spiritual alertness built on the rocklike teachings of Jesus Christ.[42]

42 Matthew 7:24-28.

We are all inconsistent at times; it is a human failing. But this does not excuse attempts to cover over, justify or deny our inconsistencies. At best, the organization has never made more than token acknowledgement of the responsibility for the damage produced by its numerous erroneous time predictions. The April 15, 1990, *Watchtower* quoted shows that even such acknowledgement has not been made willingly and that the organization is still trying to elude its responsibility and adroitly shift it over to others, actually, its victims. It is where this factor exists that the fallacy of inconsistency becomes clearly reprehensible.

Although the organization occasionally gives vague recognition to the reversal of understanding regarding its key date of 1914 (which for forty years was viewed as the end of the last days and, when that date passed, was changed to the start of the last days), it claims great stability in its holding to this date and its presently-assigned significance. However, as that date has receded farther and farther into the past, the organization has repeatedly shifted its definition of the "generation" of Matthew 24:34, which it links to that date and which "generation" is not to pass away before the final end arrives. Consider the shifting views expressed.

Though never specifically stated, for long the general impression was that "this generation" essentially related to persons who had reached adulthood by 1914 and that the generation of such people would still be alive when Armageddon arrived. Then, the October 8, 1968 *Awake!* (pages 13, 14) came out with this statement:

> Jesus was obviously speaking about those who were old enough to witness with understanding what took place when the "last days" began. Jesus was saying that some of those persons who were alive at the appearance of the 'sign of the last days' would still be alive when God brought this system to its end.
>
> Even if we presume that youngsters 15 years of age would be perceptive enough to realize the import of what happened in 1914, it would still make the youngest of "this generation" some 70 years old today. So the great majority of the generation to which Jesus was referring would already have passed away in death. The remaining ones are approaching old age. And remember, Jesus said that the end of this wicked world would come *before* that generation passed away in death. This, of itself, tells us that the years left before the foretold end comes cannot be many.

Taking 15 years as a sort of minimum would, as the article said, have made the youngest of that "generation" nearly 70 years old at that time (1968).

Ten years later, when that "youngest" member of the "generation" would have then been 80 years old, the October 1, 1978, *Watchtower* (page 31) made a slight shift.[43] The 1968 publication had said Jesus' words "obviously" referred to persons old enough to understand and be "perceptive enough to realize the import" of what took place in 1914. Now, ten years later, this was not so "obvious." Instead, the 1978 publication said it could include those who could "observe" such things as the 1914 war and other conditions. At the same time, it emphatically ruled out application to those who were merely newborn babies at that time.

Two years later, the October 15, 1980 *Watchtower* (page 31) utilizing a statement in a popular newsmagazine, brought the point at which persons' could begin creating a lasting memory down to *10 years of age*.

Back in 1978, the *Watchtower* had said that "when it comes to the application in our time, the 'generation' logically would not apply to babies born during World War I." The passage of yet six more years caused the illogical to become logical. The May 15, 1984 *Watchtower* (pages 4-7), reversed the previous position and, by use of certain definitions (found in works of scholars of Christendom), now said:

> These definitions embrace both those born around the time of a historic event and all those alive at that time.
>
> If Jesus used "generation" in that sense and we apply it to 1914, then the babies of that generation are now 70 years old or older.[44]

So, whereas the October 8, 1968 *Awake!* had referred to *15-year-olds* born in 1914 as being (in 1968) 70 years of age, by 1984 fifteen years had passed and we then find the organization talking of *babies* born in 1914 being 70 years of age.

43 The reason for publishing this particular article was that Governing Body member Albert Schroeder, during a European tour that year, had, on his own initiative, been suggesting a new understanding of "this generation." He suggested its application to the generation of the "anointed" ones, a definition which would release it from being anchored to the 1914 date and allow for its extension for as long as any of Jehovah's Witnesses, whatever the date of their birth, professed to be of that "anointed class." The *Watchtower* article was designed primarily to reaffirm the organization's holding to its basic, traditional position built around 1914. See also *Crisis of Conscience*, page 257.

44 Underlining mine. The April 8, 1988, *Awake!*, pages 13, 14, repeated this position.

Proverbs 27:16 likens the futility of restraining an obstinately contentious mate to trying to "restrain the wind or to grasp oil in the right hand." In a somewhat parallel fashion, attempts at finding anything stable in the Watch Tower organization's definition of just what "this generation" refers to are also like trying to grasp oil. Its slipperiness simply defies one's doing so.[45]

In a little more than a decade, the only persons born on or before 1914 will be those who are centenarians. As documented in *Crisis of Conscience*, despite the confident-sounding statements in Watch Tower publications, a considerable number of Governing Body members had long recognized that the traditional teaching about "this generation" was proving more and more tenuous. There is no other explanation for the fact that in 1980 the members of the Chairman's Committee drew up and presented a document which, if its reasoning had been accepted, would have placed the start of "this generation"—not in 1914—but in 1957, when the Soviet Union launched its first Sputnik![46]

Finally the teaching became so obviously untenable that a major change in the definition of "this generation" was made, applying it to "the peoples of earth who see the sign of Christ's presence but fail to mend their ways." The time factor thereby virtually disappears![47]

A similar pattern of shifting definitions can be found in the Watch Tower publications' efforts at fixing 1914 as the time when a unique worldwide "sign" appeared, related to war, famine, earthquake and pestilence. Since the abundant evidence of inconsistencies, of attempts at supporting claims by taking quotations out of context, of ignoring or suppressing contrary historical evidence, are so fully and carefully documented in the book *The Sign of the Last Days—When?*, it seems unnecessary to discuss these here. Along with Scriptural evidence demonstrating the actual sense of the critical term *parousia* and the expression "the last days," the book also presents serious reasons for believing that the whole approach to understanding Jesus' words at Matthew 24, taught not only in the Witness organization but in many other religious systems, proceeds from a wrong premise.[48]

45 In later years the publications regularly began calling attention to the number of persons in the world population who were in their 90s or who had reached 100 and who were still alive.
46 See *Crisis of Conscience*, page 256-262.
47 See *Crisis of Conscience* pages 266-268.
48 Carl Olof Jonsson and Wolfgang Herbst, *The Sign of the Last Days—When?* (Commentary Press, 1987).

Though obliged to acknowledge the shifting nature of its published "truth," the Watch Tower organization seeks to minimize or deny any significance to this inconsistency. It advances some distinctive arguments in its attempt to explain and justify the erratic course of its teachings on a number of doctrinal subjects, arguments which seek to convert mistakes and errors into "advancing truth."

Many religious works, such as Bible commentaries, that were written one or even two centuries ago are still in print and still counted as of genuine merit.[49] By contrast, there are very few Watch Tower publications that were published during the first 80 years of the organization's 110-year history that are not today considered "out of date." (They are also almost without exception "out of print" and unavailable.) Rather than being recognized as a sign of unstable research and of hastily devised teachings, this is actually presented as evidence of "advancing light"! The problem is that, in quite a number of cases, the pretended "advancement" has simply taken the organization backward to teachings it earlier discarded as in error and replaced by what was claimed to be more "advanced" truth. In such cases, what was once "advanced truth" now becomes error, and what was once error now becomes "advanced truth."

In a letter by a former Worldwide Church of God member, the writer states that members were told, "we're the true church because we change our teachings when they are wrong." The church took a certain position on divorce and remarriage, and later reversed that position. As this former member observes, this change was described by the organization's leadership as "'new light,' 'new truth' which God had (finally) shown us." He adds:

> In other words, he [the organization's head] subtly blamed our doctrinal error on God. He never once admitted that he had simply been wrong. He never apologized to all the people whose lives and marriages he had ruined. He gave God all the credit for wrecking and destroying thousands of families.[50]

49 The Watch Tower headquarters library contains literally scores of these works.

50 See Chapter 16, pages 591, 592, for further details on this letter. One cannot but remember here the Watch Tower organization's published policies on divorce, which bound individuals to mates who engaged in anal copulation with a person outside the marriage, who were homosexually active, or who even had committed a sexual act with an animal. These policies were in effect for decades and I know from being on the Governing Body at the time that when their wrongness was finally acknowledged there was virtually no expression by any of the members of concern over the suffering caused and harm done to persons' lives during those decades. See *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 47-56.

A letter from the leadership assured members that "this very experience ought to teach all that loyalty to God and to His Church must always be placed first, over supposed or real wrongs or personal grievances." On this, the writer of the letter observes:

> [He] is saying loyalty to the [church] must be placed above loyalty to God's Word! He's saying that it was right for us to obey the [church's] unbiblical and unscriptural teaching . . . all these years, because this is what he terms "loyalty to God's Church." And he says this loyalty must "always be placed first, over supposed or real wrongs or personal grievances"; in other words, loyalty to the dictates of an organization must be placed first over what the Bible teaches . . . . [He] would consider those who ten years ago refused to obey the [church's now-changed teachings] to be disloyal, even though they were being loyal to what God said in his Word.

In *identical* fashion, when discussing erroneous views of the past the Watch Tower organization commends those who did not oppose such teachings out of loyalty to "God's organization." Loyalty to the organization is thus assigned greater merit than loyalty to Scriptural truth.

Even where the matter goes full circle, the Watch Tower Society nonetheless seeks to demonstrate that there was, after all, progress. The attempt is made to show that the ultimate position differed substantially in some way from the original position.

Illustrating this graphically is an article in the December 1, 1981, *Watchtower*, which also contains a prime example of the use of false analogy in argumentation.

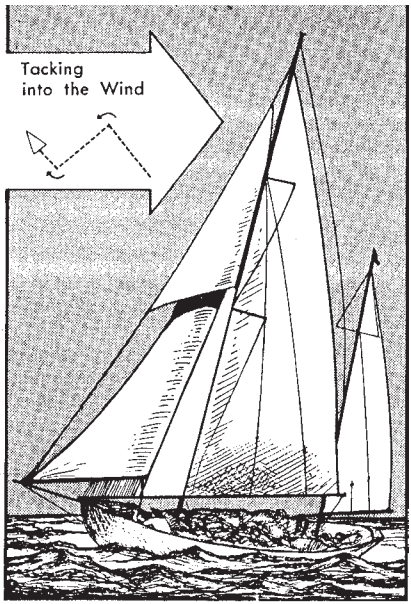
The material (on pages 27-29) endeavors to explain how it could be that God's sole channel of communication on earth could present first one view, then a totally different one, and then return to the first one.[51] The writer uses the example of a boat, "tacking against the wind," as shown on the next page.

I can remember as a traveling overseer making a trip on a sailboat in the British Virgin Islands, going from the island of Tortola to that of Virgin Gorda, and the passage took six hours to cover the seventeen miles, using such a tacking method. Sailboats must use such methods, due to unfavorable winds, but it seems puzzling that God's approved "channel" of communication to all mankind should have to resort to such a course. We are not told what the

51 The article was evidently based on a talk given on January 23, 1981, to the headquarters staff by Governing Body member Karl Klein.

contrary "winds" are that move it in wrong directions, in some cases even in articles written by the same person within a period of a few years. Consider this presentation:

[2] However, it may have seemed to some as though that path has not always gone straight forward. At times explanations given by Jehovah's visible organization have shown adjustments, seemingly to previous points of view. But this has not actually been the case. This might be compared to what is known in navigational circles as "tacking." By maneuvering the sails the sailors can cause a ship to go from right to left, back and forth, but all the time making progress toward their destination in spite of contrary winds. And that goal in view for Jehovah's servants is the "new heavens and a new earth" of God's promise.—2 Pet. 3:13.



The illustration accompanying the article presents the tacking course of the sailboat as based on 90° turns, as shown below:

To depict the course of many Watch Tower teachings the illustration would more properly appear like this:

The turns made in the *Watchtower* teachings dealt with are more like 180° turns, with a virtually complete reversal of course. They bear

no resemblance to tacking, which results in definite forward progress and brings one to a position far removed from the original starting point. In reality, the shifting positions and reversals of teaching in the *Watchtower* often compare with the movement of a person rowing a boat in open sea with no compass to guide him, and who after a time may wind up in approximately the same location he was to begin with. Consider one of the examples referred to in this same December 1, 1981 *Watchtower* issue, that of the teaching about the "higher powers" or "superior authorities" of Romans chapter thirteen.

The Superior Authorities

The initial understanding (in Pastor Russell's time) was that this expression referred to the governmental authorities of earth, to whom Christians are to render submission, paying taxes, tribute and honor (as verses 6 and 7 make quite obvious). In Judge Rutherford's time this was denied and the Watch Tower stated categorically (in 1929) that the "higher powers" were instead God and Christ. It said that the "higher powers" had no application whatsoever to secular authorities; that view was totally unacceptable. This was acclaimed as evidence of the "advancing light" of truth shining forth to God's chosen people.[52]

Thirty years later, in 1962, that "advanced light" was rejected and the view was reinstituted that the term did in fact apply to the secular authorities. Note, however, how the 1981 *Watchtower* article (page 29) presents the matter:

> 14 Happily, in the year 1962, Jehovah led his people to an understanding of the principle of *relative subjection*. It was seen that dedicated Christians must obey secular rulers as the "superior authorities," gladly recognizing these as "God's minister," or servant, for their good. (Rom. 13:4) However, if these "authorities" ask them to violate God's laws, what then? Up to that point Christians have obeyed the command at Romans 13:1: "Let every soul be in subjection to the superior authorities." But this is qualified by Jesus' words, as recorded at Matthew 22:21: "Pay back, therefore, Caesar's things to Caesar, but God's things to God." So whenever "Caesar" asks Christians to do things contrary to God's will, they must place Jehovah's law ahead of "Caesar's."

52 See the book *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, pages 91 and 124, for this view as late as 1959.

As can be seen, the claim is made that there was actual progress made, that in 1962 Jehovah's Witnesses—ostensibly for the first time!—came to understand the principle of "relative subjection," and that while rendering submission to the secular authorities they could not render total subjection to them. If those "superior authorities" asked them to do things in violation of God's laws they could not obey.

Possibly the writer of the article wrote in ignorance of the facts, though one would assume that he researched his subject. The fact is that the understanding just stated was not in the least new; in Russell's time it was always understood that subjection to secular authorities was only a relative subjection, conditioned to the authorities' demands not conflicting with God's requirements. As far back as 1886, the book *The Divine Plan of the Ages*, on page 266, stated:

> Knowing this to be the purpose of God, neither Jesus nor the apostles interfered with earthly rulers in any way. On the contrary, they taught the Church to submit to these powers, even though they often suffered under their abuse of power. They taught the Church to obey the laws, and to respect those in authority because of their office, even if they were not personally worthy of esteem; to pay their appointed taxes, and, except where they conflicted with God's laws (Acts 4:19; 5:29), to offer no resistance to any established law. (Rom. 13:1–7; Matt. 22:21.) The Lord 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.

The December 1, 1981, *Watchtower*, refers to statements (made in 1904) to the effect that Christians might serve in the army yet refrain from actually shooting anyone. This is cited as proof that these early Bible Students did not correctly understand the principle of relative subjection. The article, while traveling back as far as 1904, apparently "steered around" some unsatisfactory evidence on the way, navigating around the September 1, 1915, issue of the *Watch Tower*. There, under the heading "Christian Duty and the War," C. T. Russell made these observations:

> In SCRIPTURE STUDIES, Vol. VI., we have set forth a suggestion that the followers of Christ seek by every proper means to avoid participation in war. We there suggested the possibility, but that in the event of conscription the Lord's followers should use all their influence toward obtaining positions in the Hospital Corps or in the Provision Department of the army, rather than in the actual warfare. We suggested further that if it were impossible to avoid going into the trenches, it would still not be necessary to violate the divine requirement, "Thou shalt do no murder."

> We have been wondering since if the course we have suggested is the best one. We wonder if such a course would not mean compromise. We reflect that to become a member of the army and to put on the military uniform implies the duties and obligations of a soldier as recognized and accepted. A protest made to an officer would be insignificant—the public in general would not know of it. Would not the Christian be really out of his place under such conditions?
>
> "But," some one replies, "If one were to refuse the uniform and the military service he would be shot."
>
> We reply that if the presentation were properly made there might be some kind of exoneration; but if not, would it be any worse to be shot because of loyalty to the Prince of Peace and refusal to disobey his order than to be shot while under the banner of these earthly kings and apparently giving them support and, in appearance at least, compromising the teachings of our heavenly King? Of the two deaths we would prefer the former—prefer to die because of faithfulness to our heavenly King.
>
> ---
>
> We are not urging this course. We are merely suggesting it. The responsibility fully belongs with each individual. We are discharging our responsibility toward many Bible students who are inquiring of us respecting the mind of the Lord on this subject. We gave them our best thoughts previously, but now fear that we were too conservative.

The only difference between the position then stated and that taken by the organization today is that Russell did not attempt to impose this position about hospital service on others, but left it to their individual conscience as to what they would decide.

The claim, then, that in Russell's time there was a deficiency of understanding as to the *relative* nature of subjection to secular authorities is patently false. It simultaneously diverts attention from the basic question of the *identification* of the "high powers." In that the organization did a complete and absolute turnaround. Even if the understanding of relative subjection *had* altered in later times, this still would not change in the slightest the fact that a totally wrong definition of the "higher powers" was adopted and held to for thirty years before returning to the right definition.

Yet there was no genuine change in understanding of relative subjection. Even if some minor difference of viewpoint were allowed, the radical reversals made in the organization's teachings about the "higher powers" would still be like starting out for a point that is due north, then turning around and heading south to a point essentially the same as where one started. That is not "tacking," in which the "zigging and zagging" steadily and consistently bring the vessel closer to its goal. It is instead simply wasteful backtracking. The method of "advancing" in understanding presented in the *Watchtower* article has about as much to recommend it as would circumnavigating a 100-mile-long island in order to arrive at a point just a mile or so from where you started.

As for recognizing the principle of "relative subjection," one can find dozens of Bible commentaries that, when dealing with Romans chapter thirteen, make the point that Christian subjection to secular authorities is always relative, conditional. That is true of commentaries written one hundred and two hundred years ago, yes, even long before there was a *Watchtower* magazine.

As just one example, the still-popular commentary by Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes*, written between 1832 and 1851, says of the injunction to 'submit to the superior authorities' found at Romans 13:1:

> The word used here does not designate the extent of the submission, but merely enjoins it in general. The general principle will be seen to be, that we are to obey in all things which are not contrary to the law of God. . . .
>
> It could not be and never was a question whether they would obey a magistrate when he commanded a thing that was plainly contrary to the law of God.

This is the identical position adopted by the Watch Tower Society and it was written before Charles Taze Russell was even born. Yet the *Watchtower* article quoted would make it appear that God led his anointed people to that light for the very first time as of 1962!

The major fault of this whole "back and forth" concept and analogy is not simply that it does not fit the facts, but that it so gravely misrepresents God historic manner of revealing truth to his servants.

Frequently the example of the wrong viewpoint about circumcision held by many first century Christians is cited as justification for the fluctuating views and reversals of various Watch Tower teachings. However, rather than illustrate an erratic, back-and-forth course, that wrong understanding by early Christians only manifests a tendency on the part of some, primarily in Judea, to *stay with* a practice instituted by God himself many centuries earlier, a *slowness* to acknowledge that the "shadows" found in the Law Covenant had met up with the "reality" found in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Theirs was not a case of switching back and forth on beliefs but of being slow to move forward in understanding.

A reading of the Scriptures as a whole demonstrates that God's revelation of his purposes to mankind through the various means of communication he employed—the inspired prophets and Bible writers—was one of steady progression. There is no wandering, no zig-zagging, but an orderly unfolding of the divine purpose, each progressive step leading right onward to the next progressive step of revelation, without deviation or misdirection. That is one reason why we can put trust in the reliability of that written Word.

The zig-zag course admitted in the *Watchtower* articles in no way demonstrates divine guidance. It demonstrates the opposite, namely, imperfect human reasoning. Since we are all subject to such reasoning, this of itself is not the major problem. The real problem comes when men insist that their reasonings should be taken as divinely "revealed truths," and condemn those who, in the free exercise of their personal judgment, find them otherwise.

To place implicit trust in a source that makes such extreme claims for itself, to fail to test its direction against the sure compass of God's revealed Word, is a course that has nothing to recommend it.

While certain rules of logic, such as those discussed, may be helpful in discerning falsity in argumentation, knowledge of them is not an essential. Our Creator has endowed us with natural intelligence and if we avoid hasty acceptance and give ourselves time to think, to ask questions, prayerfully seeking the help of his Spirit, we can be protected against serious deception. Rather than stand in awe of men or of their impressiveness in speech or writing, we should submit their sayings to test, should ask ourselves, "Has the point honestly been proved or is it largely assertion? Is this the *only* reasonable explanation so that I am obliged to accept it as truth?"

Christian liberation and truth go together. (John 8:32) We will never gain God's promised freedom unless we are willing to make the effort to determine what is truth and what is not. This does not require that we feel compelled to try to "nail down" the precise meaning of every single statement in Scripture. Many statements allow for more than one understanding and the alternative understanding may be as compatible with the rest of the Scriptures as the initial one. The crucial truths, those on which our faith must rest, are such that all of us can understand. God's Son could thus thank his Father that He had "hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children."[53]

Our love of freedom, then, must be matched by our love of truth, and truth's companion, honesty. We may naturally incline to take the easier course, one of passive submission. But to suspend our God-given powers of critical thinking and analysis and become mere credulous accepters of what men tell us is truth only leads to human bondage. Life itself depends on our being willing to bear the cost that love of truth requires, for God's approved worshipers "must worship in spirit and truth."[54]

53 Luke 10:21, *NIV*.
54 John 4:23, 24.

14

A People for His Name

Our Father in the heavens, let your name be sanctified.—Matthew 6:9.

EVERY TRUE Christian should honor, glorify and make known the name of the God of heaven and earth. Scriptures exhorting us to do this are numerous, both the pre-Christian and the Christian writings.

Jehovah's Witnesses sincerely believe that they alone of all people on the earth are making God's name known. This is because of the great frequency with which they use the name "Jehovah" both in their literature and in their speech. That name is derived from what is called the "Tetragrammaton" (meaning "four letters"), the Hebrew letters "YHWH."[1] The Tetragrammaton appears nearly 7,000 times in the Bible writings of the Old Testament (Genesis to Malachi). There is, then, no question as to its prominence in pre-Christian times. Nor is there any doubt that, among all the well-known religious groups today, none uses that particular name, Jehovah, with a greater degree of frequency and constancy than do Jehovah's Witnesses. Does this actually identify them as exclusively "God's name people"? Are they rightly to be credited with having "restored the divine name" on earth in modern times?

Whence the Name "Jehovah's Witnesses"?

For the first half century of the Watch Tower Society's existence those affiliated with it had no particular denominational name. They were, they said, just "Bible students." As we have seen in Chapter 4, the founder of the *Watch Tower* magazine and of the society connected with it, Charles Taze Russell, opposed the adoption of any distinguishing name, viewing this as a form of sectarianism.[2] The April, 1882, issue of the *Watch Tower* (pages

1 Scholars recognize that "Jehovah" is not an accurate rendering of the Tetragrammaton; many believe "Yahweh" comes closest to the correct pronunciation of the Hebrew. In its original "Foreword" the Watch Tower's *New World Translation* stated: "While inclining to view the pronunciation 'Yah.weh,' as the more correct way, we have retained the form 'Jehovah' because of people's familiarity with it since the 14th century." See *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*, page 25.

2 See Chapter 4, pages 71-73, 75.

7, 8) which discussed this matter, quoted approvingly these words of John Bunyan, found in his well-known *Pilgrim's Progress*:

> Since you would know by what name I would be distinguished from others, I tell you I would be, and hope I am, a Christian; and choose, if God should count me worthy, to be called a Christian, a believer, or other such name which is approved by the Holy Ghost. And as for those factious (or sect) titles of Anabaptist, Presbyterian, Independent, or the like, I conclude that they came neither from Antioch nor from Jerusalem, but from Hell and Babylon, for they tend to divisions; you may know them by their fruits.

To resort to the use of specialized names was thus decried as a clear sign of sectarianism. This stand was repeated in the reply to another question appearing in the March, 1883, issue (page 6). Along with rejecting the idea of developing a visible organization, the response stated:

> We always refuse to be called by any other name than that of our Head—Christians—continually claiming that there can be no division among those continually led by his Spirit and example as made known through his Word.[3]

It was in 1931 that Joseph F. Rutherford, Russell's successor to the Watch Tower presidency, selected the name of "Jehovah's Witnesses" for the organizational membership. Rutherford stated that the name chosen was "the name which the mouth of the Lord God has named, and we desire to be known as and called by the name, to wit, 'Jehovah's Witnesses.'" Isaiah 43:10-12; 62:2 and Revelation 12:17 were cited as basis for the adoption of this name.[4]

A reading of these passages, however, does not in any way reveal that God purposed that his words there spoken were to be formed into a distinctive name for Christians to bear as much as 2,600 years later. Isaiah 43:10-12 is the primary text used by the organization to justify its chosen name. This scripture, however, simply presents a figurative court scene, in which all nations are gathered and before whom the Israelites are called upon by God to bear testimony to His saving power exercised on their behalf. Why, out of all the statements God makes regarding the nation of Israel, should these words become "the name which the mouth of the Lord God has named" to be placed upon Christians today?

3 See photocopy in Chapter 4, page 73.
4 See *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, pages 125, 126.

At Acts 11:26, we read that "the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." That was the name by which they were known and which they themselves used, as is shown in the texts at Acts 26:28 and 1 Peter 4:16. The *New World Translation* even renders Acts 11:26 as saying "it was first in Antioch that the disciples were *by divine providence* called Christians." Whether such rendering is accurate or not, the question remains, by what right does any man or group of men decide to adopt a name other than the one used by first century Christians? Where is there the divine authorization or direction to do so? Among the last recorded words that God's Son spoke on earth to his disciples is the command:

> You will be witnesses of me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria and to the most distant parts of the earth.[5]

By what right, then, do men who claim to be footstep followers of God's Son select a name which does not even bear witness to the Christ? How do they justify choosing a name that reaches back some 700 years before his appearance as the Messiah, back to words spoken to the Jewish people under the Law Covenant?[6]

The major justification resorted to in 1931 and thereafter has been that there is no longer anything distinctive about the name "Christian." That name has been used by hundreds of millions of persons throughout the world, divided into hundreds of different denominations and sects. What, however, does the adoption of a different name prove or accomplish? It simply follows the pattern of those same hundreds of denominations. Each of them has done the same thing—they have all adopted a distinctive name as Roman Catholics, Orthodox Catholics, Marionite Catholics, Lutherans, Methodists, Baptists, Church of Christ, Church of God, Mennonites, Society of Friends and so forth.

That not all who subsequently took the name "Christian" truly were such is evident. Christ Jesus warned of apostasy in his parable of the wheat and the weeds. The apostle Paul, who was known as a "Christian," echoed that warning in his writings.[7] In the Revelation, the apostle John laid bare the impure adulterated state already

5 Acts 1:8.

6 Some years ago the *Watchtower* magazine occasionally modified the name in its articles by using the expression "Jehovah's Christian witnesses." (See also the 1971 book "*The Nations Shall Know that I Am Jehovah,"*,which frequently employs this term, as in pages 51-54, 76, 82, and so forth.) It was then learned that a group of former Witnesses had already adopted and registered legally this name. The *Watchtower* thereafter generally desisted from using the expression. An exception is found in the August 15, 1980, *Watchtower*, page 24.

7 Matthew 13:24-30; Acts 20:29, 30; 2 Timothy 4:3, 4.

existing in some congregations in his day.[8] It was clearly recognized that there would be false Christians, many of them. But neither Christ nor Paul nor John nor any of the Bible writers indicated that a change of name would in any way remedy the situation. It was not by the adoption of some different name, a new label as it were, but by means of a *life course* that exemplified genuine Christianity and by means of *adherence to truth* as found in the teachings of God's Son and his apostles and disciples that the only meaningful distinction could be made.[9] When the angels of God carry out the final part of the parabolic picture in effecting the harvest of the wheat from the weeds, labels in the form of denominational names surely will play no part.

"Restoration" of the Name—By Whom?

One might think, from reading the Watch Tower publications, that the name "Jehovah" was virtually unknown before its appearance in those publications, and that these have brought it to the world's notice. An examination of the Watch Tower publications during the first forty years of their existence, however, reveals that the name "Jehovah" appeared with no greater frequency in those publications than in many other religious publications of the times. As just one example, the *Watch Tower* issue of April 15, 1919, contained the name "Jehovah" only one time in the entire magazine! That would be unthinkable today. Yet by 1919 Christ Jesus is supposed to have already approved and chosen, out of all the religions on earth, the organization built around the Watch Tower Society as his sole channel of communication. If so, one would be obliged to say that his choice evidently was not predicated on any special prominence given to the name "Jehovah."

The fact is that religious writers of various Christian faiths had employed the name "Jehovah" in their writings with considerable frequency for centuries before the appearance of the Watch Tower Society. The library of the Writing Department at the Watch Tower headquarters contains a large number of Bible commentaries and other works dating back two or more centuries which clearly illustrates this.

8 Revelation chapters 2 and 3.

9 Matthew 5:16, 44, 45; John 13:35; 17:17-19; Romans 6:4, 8-10; Galatians 2:20; 1 John 2:5,6; 2 John 6. In addition to the group already mentioned officially known as "Jehovah's Christian Witnesses" there are also a considerable number of earlier "Sacred Name" movements, prominent among which is that called "Assemblies of Yahweh." None of these show any connection, in origin or otherwise, with the Watch Tower organization. These movements use the name derived from the Tetragrammaton with a frequency that is certainly equal to that of Jehovah's Witnesses, and their Bible translations, such as the *Holy Name Bible*, use that name with *even greater frequency* in the New Testament scriptures. This information is based on a treatise by Rud Persson, mentioned later in this chapter.

The name is to be found in the hymn books of many long standing Protestant denominations. One of the better-known hymns of the 18th century is titled "Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah." The *Watchtower* magazine itself has published material showing the appearance of the Tetragrammaton in past centuries in many countries of the world, in religious buildings and inscriptions.[10] As far back as the year 1602, the Spanish Bible translation by Cipriano de Valera rendered the Tetragrammaton thousands of times as *Jehová* (Jehovah). In the nineteenth century, translations of the Bible made in various languages by Christian missionaries had already utilized some form of the name "Jehovah" in their rendering of the Tetragrammaton.[11] The trend toward nonuse of the name seems to have been to a considerable degree contemporaneous with the development of a particular school of religious thought in the latter part of the nineteenth century which propagated a more critical attitude toward the Bible as a whole.

Notably, in the year 1901, the *American Standard Version* of the Bible (produced by scholars of Christendom) rectified the practice of substituting "LORD" or "GOD" for the Tetragrammaton in translating the Hebrew Scriptures, a practice typical of most previous English versions, including the most popular, the *King James* or *Authorized Version*. Whereas the *Authorized Version* rendered the Tetragrammaton by the name "Jehovah" only four times in the entire Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament, the *American Standard Version* restored it in its nearly 7,000 occurrences. Though the inaccuracy of rendering the Hebrew "YHWH" by "Jehovah" is acknowledged, this was nonetheless an improvement over the use of "GOD" and "LORD" employed to represent the Tetragrammaton in other English-language versions.[12]

There is no question then that the Watch Tower Society did not "restore" the name "Jehovah," because there was no need for any

10 See for example the *Watchtower*, July 1, 1988, page 14; April 1, 1988, page 31; *Awake!*, April 22, 1988, page 19; the *Watchtower*, May 15, 1987, page 23; the brochure *The Divine Name that Will Endure Forever*, pages 10, 11.

11 See the "Foreword" of the *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*, pages 24, 25.

12 Although the *American Standard Version*, with its rendering of the name "Jehovah" thousands of times, was available from 1901 onward, the *Watch Tower* magazine did not adopt that translation as its basic translation but continued to employ primarily the *King James* or *Authorized Version* with its use of "LORD" and "GOD" as substitutes for the Tetragrammaton. Even after the death of Russell in 1916 and during the presidency of Rutherford this continued to be the case. Following Rutherford's death, in 1944 the Watch Tower Society obtained rights for printing an edition of the *American Standard Version* on their own presses. Yet, although frequently quoting from this translation and numerous others, they continued to use the *Authorized Version* as their basic version in all their publications up until the year 1950 when they published their own *New World Translation* of the Bible. (See *Jehovah's Witnesses in the Divine Purpose*, pages 215, 255.)

"restoring" of it at the time that society came on the scene. It was a definitely established term, found in many Bible translations and religious writings long before the appearance of that society. Despite this, the fact remains that today no religious group *of any size* uses the name "Jehovah" with such intense frequency as does that of Jehovah's Witnesses. That name predominates throughout their literature. Among Jehovah's Witnesses it has become almost strange to speak of "God" without prefacing the term by saying "Jehovah God," while the term "Lord" is quite rare in their expressions. They read "Lord" in the Bible but hardly ever use it in their own speech extemporaneously. It is almost a liturgical form for them in most prayers to initially address these to "Jehovah" or "Jehovah God," with the expression "Father" or "Our Father" only occasionally used as an added, follow-up address. Although reference to the "organization" or "the Governing Body" is very common in prayer, the name of Christ Jesus often does not receive mention until the final words, "In Jesus' name. Amen."

The question is: Does all this repetitive use of the name "Jehovah" genuinely fulfill the numerous Scriptural exhortations to honor and make known God's name? Does this intense emphasis on the name "Jehovah" in reality reflect a clear understanding of what is actually signified by the word "name" in many of such Scriptures?

The Crucial Factor

Since it is evident that the name represented by the Tetragrammaton was very prominent in the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament, the question reduces to its use and prominence in the *Christian* Scriptures and the attitude of *Christians* toward that name represented by the Tetragrammaton. It would seem that the primary and most decisive factor in arriving at an answer would be evidence of the degree of prominence God's own Son, his apostles and other early disciples gave to that specific name (represented in the Tetragrammaton). What do we find?

Although themselves Jewish, the writers of the Christian Scriptures or New Testament wrote in Greek, the most influential, most widely used, language of the time. None of the original writings remain, but there are in existence ancient copies of the entire body of Christian Scriptures dating back to the fourth century A.D. Copies of portions thereof date back much earlier. However, the only place we find any mention of the name represented by the Tetragrammaton in any of these ancient copies is in a shortened

form found in the book of Revelation. In Revelation chapter nineteen, verses 1, 3, 4, and 6, we find the Greek phrase *Allelouia* meaning "Praise Yah [or Jah]," or, as we commonly say, "Hallelujah." In this expression "Jah" is simply a shortened form of "Jehovah." What is remarkable is that, beyond these four occurrences of that abbreviated form in Revelation, *nowhere else in the Christian Scriptures contained in these ancient copies do we find a single occurrence of this name*. Since there are an estimated 5,000 existing copies in Greek of these Christian Scriptures, the fact that *not a single one* of these thousands of copies contains the Tetragrammaton is all the more impressive.[13] The same is true of the earliest translations of those Christian Scriptures into other languages, such as the Syriac, Armenian, Sahidic and Old Latin translations.[14]

For this reason, in the vast majority of translations of the New Testament the name "Jehovah" does not appear outside of its abbreviated appearance in the book of Revelation. By contrast, if we turn to the Watch Tower Society's *New World Translation* we will find the name "Jehovah" (and "Jehovah's") 237 times from Matthew to Revelation. The fact is, however, that when the *New World Translation* places the name "Jehovah" in any part of the Christian Scriptures it does so without any support from a single one of the ancient manuscripts of those Christian Scriptures. In 227 of the places where "Jehovah" appears in the Watch Tower's translation, the Greek text on which the translation states it is based reads "the Lord" (*kyrios*), and in the remaining 10 cases that Greek text contains the word "God" (*theos*). Any reader may see this by simply taking the Watch Tower's *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* and comparing the translation (in the outside columns of the pages) with the word-for-word interlinear reading. On what basis, then, does the *New World Translation* insert the name?

Essentially the argument of the Watch Tower Society is that the Tetragrammaton *was* used by the writers of the Christian Scriptures, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul, Peter, James and Jude, in their *original* writings. Obviously, this cannot be proved. None of those original writings is extant today. None of the 5,000 copies that do exist contain the Tetragrammaton. Still, the Watch Tower's claim is that the name must have been *removed* from later copies of the original writings, this being done to conform to the practice that had been in existence for some time of replacing the

13 See *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, page 315.
14 This information and a number of points made in this chapter were provided by Rud Persson, a researcher in Sweden, and with his permission.

Tetragrammaton (YHWH) with the word "Lord" (*kyrios*) or "God" (*theos*). That practice evidently developed in the centuries preceding the appearance of Christ. It was not due to a failure to give importance to the name represented by the Tetragrammaton. To the contrary, it was due to viewing that name as too sacred to be pronounced, and traditional Jewish writings indicate that the pronunciation thereof became limited to the priesthood at the temple and particularly to the High Priest of that Aaronic priesthood.[15]

The Evidence from Ancient Sources

In the third century B.C., the first translation of the Hebrew Scriptures was made into the Greek language, a translation known as the *Septuagint Version*. In quoting from the Hebrew Scriptures in their writings, there is clear evidence that the writers of the Christian Scriptures often quoted from that *Septuagint* translation. This point assumes considerable importance in the effort to determine whether or not those Bible writers actually included the Tetragrammaton in their writings. If they did, this would be at least a clue as to the degree of prominence they gave to the particular name of God represented by those four Hebrew letters. The first question is, did they find the Tetragrammaton in the copies of the Greek *Septuagint* that they used?

It was long believed that, from the start, the Tetragrammaton did not appear in that first translation of the Hebrew Scriptures. It was assumed that the translators followed the practice of substituting it with Lord (*kyrios*) or God (*theos*). The many copies of the *Septuagint* then known supported that belief. Today, however, there is sound reason to question whether the *Septuagint* translators made such substitution. One fragmentary copy of a portion of the *Septuagint*, written on papyrus and found in Egypt, has been dated as of the first century B.C. It contains the second half of the book of Deuteronomy, with the Tetragrammaton (written in Hebrew characters) appearing throughout.[16] Though not from the pre-Christian (or B.C.) period, a small number of other Greek manuscripts of the *Septuagint* from the early centuries (A.D.), supply similar examples. Additional evidence for the appearance of the Tetragrammaton in early Greek translations of the Hebrew Scriptures is found in statements by Origen (of the third century A.D.),

15 See, for example, *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, page 6.

16 This is called the Papyrus Fouad Inventory No. 266 and copies of portions thereof are found in the appendix of the Watch Tower Society's *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*, pages 1135, 1136.

and by Jerome (translator of the Latin *Vulgate* in the fourth century A.D.) who said that "we find the four-lettered name of God in certain Greek volumes even to this day expressed in the ancient letters."[17]

What significance does all this have? The Watch Tower Society arrives at the conclusion that the copies of the *Septuagint* read *and quoted from* during the time of Christ and his apostles customarily contained the Tetragrammaton. The Watch Tower Society goes much farther, however. On the basis of the aforementioned evidence it claims that, when the Christian Scriptures were written, the Christian writers *included* the Tetragrammaton and that, "at least from the 3d century A.D. onward, the divine name in Tetragrammaton form has been eliminated from the text by copyists," substituting the words *kyrios* (Lord) and *theos* (God) for it.[18]

The Watch Tower believed it found strong support for its introducing the name "Jehovah" into the New Testament or Christian Scriptures in statements made in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* (Vol. 96, No. 1, 1977) by an associate professor of religion at the University of Georgia, George Howard. The May 1, 1978, issue of the *Watchtower*, pages 9, 10, quoted Professor Howard extensively on this subject, giving particular emphasis to his following statement:

> Since the Tetragram was still written in the copies of the Greek Bible [the *Septuagint*] which made up the Scriptures of the early church, it is reasonable to believe that the N[ew] T[estament] writers, when quoting from Scripture, preserved the Tetragram within the biblical text. On the analogy of pre-Christian Jewish practice we can imagine that the NT text incorporated the Tetragram into its OT quotations.

The appearance of the Tetragrammaton in the aforementioned ancient manuscript portions of the pre-Christian *Septuagint* translation of the Hebrew Scriptures is definitely noteworthy.

17 See *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*, pages 10, 11, 1134-1136; see also the August 1, 1988, *Watchtower*, page 30; *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, page 315. The Watch Tower Society also appeals to Aquila's Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures for support of the view that the *Septuagint* copies in Jesus' and the apostles' day contained the Tetragrammaton. In his book *The Jehovah's Witness New World Translation*, pages 28, 29, Dr. Robert Countess shows that this appeal is ill-founded. For one thing, Aquila's translation dates from about 130 A.D., decades after the writing of the Christian Scriptures. Secondly, Aquila's translation has been found to be "slavishly literal" to the Hebrew text to the "absurd point at which the intelligibility of the text suffered," being far different in many areas from the *Septuagint* renderings, as scholars versed in Greek manuscripts have pointed out. Aquila's work should hardly stand as a likely example of what the *Septuagint* in its original form or in its copies contained.

18 See *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures*, pages 11, 12, 18; *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures* (1985), pages 1137, 1138.

Its noteworthiness derives from the *absence* of the Tetragrammaton (in any form) in all other ancient copies of the *Septuagint*, including the oldest complete (or nearly complete) manuscripts of the Bible writings.[19] The discovery of these ancient fragments of the *Septuagint* clearly allows for the *possibility* of the regular appearance of the Tetragrammaton in *Septuagint* copies current in Palestine in the first century A.D., though of itself it would not *prove* that such was the case.

More important to the issue under consideration, it does not prove that the *Christian writers themselves* included the Tetragrammaton in *their* writings or that it was to be found in any early copies of their writings, such as those previous to the third century. The Watch Tower publications are very definite in the matter, as in saying that "these Christian writers undoubtedly employed the divine name Jehovah" when quoting from the Hebrew Scriptures, and, of Matthew, that where making such quotations, "he would have been obliged faithfully to include the Tetragrammaton" in his Gospel account.[20] By contrast, Professor Howard, whom the *Watchtower* has frequently quoted in support of their claims, limits the matter to at most a reasonable possibility or probability, as in his expression "we can imagine that the NT text incorporated the Tetragram into its OT quotations." In quoting from his *Journal of Biblical Literature* article, the *Watchtower* magazine does not point out to its readers that Howard's article is filled with cautious, qualifying expressions such as "this theory," "in all probability," "it is possible that," "if our theory is correct," "the theory we suggest," "if we assume," and so forth. Note, also, that Howard speaks of the Christian writers incorporating "the Tetragram," that is the four Hebrew letters (יהוה), *not* some trans-

19 These include the Sinaitic, the Vatican Manuscript 1209, and the Alexandrine, all of the 4th and 5th centuries A.D.

20 See *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 1, page 443; the *New World Translation* (1984 Reference Edition), page 1564. The organization shows inconsistency here. In the February 1, 1988, issue of the *Watchtower* (page 5), in an article titled "Does the Bible Contradict Itself?" the magazine says of the Christian Scripture writers, "Quotations from earlier writings might be altered slightly from the original statements to meet the needs and purposes of the new writer, while still retaining the basic sense and thought . . . . Omissions would likewise be according to the writer's viewpoint and his condensation of the account." Thus, on the one hand the Watch Tower Society says that in making quotations the Christian Scripture writers "would have been obliged" to include the Tetragrammaton if it was in the Hebrew Scripture copy used, and on the other it says that the writers might properly 'alter slightly' the original statements and make omissions as deemed advisable, while still retaining "the basic sense and thought."

lation thereof, such as "Yahweh" or "Jehovah." Even if those four Hebrew letters had been included in the original Christian Scriptures, this would be no proof that, on coming to them, the reader would *pronounce* them as "Yahweh" or some similar form, rather than use "Lord" or "God."[21]

A Far Weightier Source of Evidence

Whatever weight one may feel should be assigned to the aforementioned textual evidence regarding the Greek *Septuagint* translation of the Old Testament or Hebrew Scriptures, there is additional textual evidence that clearly is of considerably greater significance. This is because it gives far stronger indication as to the actual practice of *the writers of the Christian Scriptures themselves* with regard to use of the Tetragrammaton. And this, after all, is the question of ultimate importance: Did *they*, the Christian Bible writers, employ the Tetragrammaton, whether in quoting from the Hebrew Scriptures or at any other time?

One of the two most ancient copies of apostolic writings that have been found is a papyrus codex (designated Chester Beatty Papyrus No. 2 [P46]). It contains, in fragmentary form, nine of the apostle Paul's letters: Romans, Hebrews, First Corinthians, Second Corinthians, Ephesians, Galatians, Philippians, Colossians and First Thessalonians.[22] The date of this codex formerly was for long estimated to be about 200 A.D.[23] There is now, however, some evidence for dating it even earlier. In 1988, in Volume 69, Fasc. 2, of the scholarly publication *Biblica*, Dr. Y. K. Kim, a manuscript expert, has presented serious evidence for redating it to the latter part of the first century, perhaps even before the reign of Emperor

21 As pointed out by Swedish researcher Rud Persson, this also must be considered when weighing the significance of the appearance of the Hebrew Tetragrammaton in a few copies of the Greek *Septuagint* translation. The copyists producing such manuscipt copies were copying a *Greek* text. Yet they placed the Tetragrammaton in that Greek text in ***Hebrew*** letters. They did not translate it into some Greek expression corresponding to "Yahweh" or "Jehovah," or even transliterate the Hebrew letters into corresponding Greek letters. They left it in Hebrew (יהוה) and only if the reader knew that language could he attempt any pronunciation whatsoever. Otherwise, he would not know how to convert those Hebrew characters over to his own alphabet and language, even Jerome states that some in his day, on coming upon these four letters (יהוה) tried to read them as Greek letters and thus pronounced them as "Pi Pi" (Greek πίπι). Thus, when it comes to translations into English or any other modern language, those few *Septuagint* copies would do no more than give some basis, however fragile, for inserting the Tetragrammaton—in *Hebrew characters*—in quotations made by the Christian writers from the Hebrew Scriptures. They provide no basis for inserting some *translation* of those characters, as in the name "Jehovah" or "Yahweh."

22 Paul's authorship of Hebrews has been a subject of question among scholars. Its inclusion here would seem to weigh in favor of that authorship.

23 See *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, page 316.

Domitian, that is, before 81 A.D. If correct, the evidence he advances would, at the least, place the papyrus collection within a few decades of the time of Paul's original writings.[24]

Even if we retain the more popular dating of this papyrus collection as from the close of the second century, this still has considerable significance as to the question we here consider. The argument of the Watch Tower Society is that the original apostolic writings contained the Tetragrammaton, hundreds of times, and that it was only in subsequent centuries that 'apostate Christians' removed it from those writings. If that is the case, and if those original apostolic writings contained numerous uses of the Tetragrammaton, is it not reasonable that during the century *immediately following* the writing of the Christian Scriptures there should have been at least some retention of the Tetragrammaton in the copies made? If the Tetragrammaton had appeared originally in the letters of Paul, some of them written as late as 60/61 A.D., it seems difficult to believe that it would have been quickly eliminated in subsequent copies. The Watch Tower organization accepts the view held by many that the apostle John lived right up to the close of the first century. If the use of the Tetragrammaton were of major importance, certainly John's influence should have exercised an effect in its favor on Christian copyists of apostolic letters (including the letters of Paul), not only during John's lifetime but for some time thereafter. It is certainly reasonable that we should expect to find at least some appearances of the Tetragrammaton in the letters found in the ancient papyrus collection earlier described. What is the case?

The plain fact is that in these nine apostolic letters found in this most ancient Christian codex *there is not a single use of the Tetragrammaton in any form*. In these nine letters the apostolic writer makes numerous quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures, following the wording of the *Septuagint* translation, but *not once do his quotations contain the Tetragrammaton*. His quotations follow the practice of replacing the Tetragrammaton with the Greek *kyrios* (Lord) or *theos* (God). The Watch Tower Society argues that the appearance of the Tetragrammaton in some of the most ancient copies (actually fragmentary copies) of the *Septuagint Version* is proof that it was *originally* there. If that principle applies, then the same principle should rightly apply here, namely, that the *absence* of

24 It should be noted that paleographical evidence, employed by Dr. Kim, is considered the most reliable means for dating ancient manuscripts. (See also *Awake!*, June 22, 1972, page 8.)While by no means all scholars accept Dr. Kim's redating, a number of qualified scholars have expressed recognition of the soundness of his work.

the Tetragrammaton in this most ancient copy of nine of Paul's letters is proof that it was also absent in the apostle's *original* writings.

Indeed, if the Tetragrammaton had appeared originally in his letters, some of them written as late as 60/61 A.D., it seems inconceivable that it would have been eliminated so soon after the original writing, at a time when other apostles, notably John, were still alive. Combined with this is the fact that, with the sole exception of the book of Revelation and its abbreviated form "Yah" or "Jah," no form of the Tetragrammaton is found in any ancient manuscript of any of the Christian Scriptures, whether those written by Paul or by any other Christian writer.

The claim of the Watch Tower Society that, when quoting from the Hebrew Scriptures, the apostles and other first-century Christian writers included the Tetragrammaton in their writings is, then, based on theory only, a speculative theory that the historical evidence weighs predominantly against.[25]

Justification Sought Through Various Hebrew Translations

Often the Watch Tower's insertion of the name "Jehovah" into the text of the Christian writings does correspond to the writer's quotation of a portion of the Hebrew Scriptures in which the Tetragrammaton appears. However, this by no means accounts for all the 237 insertions of the name by the *New World Translation*. The insertions are made in many cases where no quotation at all is involved. How is *this* justified?

In an endeavor to give some authenticity to these (and other) insertions of the name "Jehovah," *insertions which none of the ancient copies justifies*, the Watch Tower Society has resorted to claiming support by reference to numerous translations of the Christian Scriptures into the Hebrew language, translations which include the Tetragrammaton frequently in their renderings. The fact is, however, that all of these Hebrew translations were made from *the fourteenth century A.D. onward*, some as recently as the nineteenth century.[26] While their being in *Hebrew* may give an appearance of authentic support, it is only that—an appearance. The various translators were doing nothing more than expressing personal choice by their insertion of the Tetragrammaton where the Greek manuscripts from which they were translating actually contained the word "Lord" or "God."[27] In reality, these Hebrew translations carry

25 The Watch Tower publications have frequently quoted Professor Howard in support of their claims, yet in a letter to Rud Persson, Professor Howard states, "The Jehovah's Witnesses have made too much of my articles. I do not support their theories." See the Appendix for a photocopy of his letter to Rud Persson.

26 See *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures* (1985), pages 13, 14.

27 See the listing in the *Kingdom Interlinear* 1969 edition., pages 28-30.

no more weight in the matter than would a translation into any other language—Arabic, German, or Portuguese—made in the same period. They demonstrate, not evidence, but only opinion, that of the particular translator. They prove nothing as to the use of the Tetragrammaton, or the degree of prominence given to it, by Christ or his disciples. Not only this, but by its "leapfrogging" over the most ancient ***manuscripts*** of the Christian Scriptures and the wording found in them, in favor of these Hebrew ***translations*** that are a thousand years more recent, the *New World Translation* goes against a basic principle of translation—that the oldest manuscripts, by virtue of being closer to the originals, are to be given the greatest weight. Thus, the *Watchtower* of March 15, 1982, page 23, states: "The older the Bible manuscript is, the closer it is likely to be to the original autographs of the inspired writers, none of which are in existence today." Yet in this matter the Watch Tower organization chooses to ignore the evidence from over 5,000 ancient Greek manuscripts—none of which contains the Tetragrammaton—and be guided by, not *manuscripts* in that original language, but essentially modern *translations*, which ultimately reflect the personal view of the translators.[28]

Inconsistency of Claims

The Watch Tower Society's position is remarkably inconsistent. On the one hand, the Society argues that the writers of the Christian Scriptures originally included some form of the Tetragrammaton in their writings. On the other hand, the Society makes the repeated acknowledgment that those Christian Scriptures were preserved with remarkable accuracy. Its publication *Insight on the Scriptures*, Volume 2, page 314, quotes Professor Kurt Aland as stating:

> The text of the New Testament has been excellently transmitted, better than any other writing from ancient times; the possibility that manuscripts might yet be found that would change its text decisively is zero.

In the April 1, 1977, issue of the *Watchtower*, after quoting world-renowned Greek text scholar F. J. A. Hort as saying, "the amount of what can in any sense be called substantial variation [in the ancient copies of the Christian Scriptures] can hardly form

28 See also *Awake!*, June 22, 1972, pages 5-8; March 8, 1971, page 23. The *Watchtower* of March 1, 1991, page 28, in its effort to justify the insertion of the Tetragrammaton into the Christian Scriptures, even goes so far as to refer to certain ***German*** translations that contain the name in footnotes and commentaries! Surely no responsible translator would view this as giving any basis for ignoring or overriding the ancient manuscript evidence itself in favor of a different rendering.

more than a thousandth part of the entire text," the *Watchtower* itself went on to say (page 219):

> Whatever version of the Christian Scriptures you possess, there is no reason to doubt that the Greek text upon which it is based represents with considerable fidelity what the inspired authors of these Bible books originally wrote. Though now nearly 2,000 years removed from the time of their original composition, the Greek text of the Christian Scriptures is a marvel of accurate transmission.

Numerous articles stressing the purity and accuracy of the Bible text credit such preservation to the *deep respect for the divine record and intense concern for fidelity of transmission* on the part of the copyists, and to the influence of the "Divine Author of the Bible." Thus, an article in the *Awake!* magazine of May 8, 1985 (page 14) says that, since God inspired the original writings, "It is logical that he would oversee a faithful transmittal of his Word down to our present day."[29]

The problem here is that the organization denies its own position in its claims with regard—not to some trivial omission or variation—but with regard to something they view as one of the most important of all the features of the Scriptures, the name represented by the Tetragrammaton. For they, in effect, are saying that God, who exercised his divine influence to preserve the Greek text of the Christian Scriptures so that it is "a marvel of accurate transmission," at the same time failed to see to it that some form of the name "Jehovah" was preserved *in even so much as a single one of the approximately 5,000 ancient manuscript copies of those Christian Scriptures*. If the tremendous importance that the organization attaches to the Tetragrammaton is soundly based, how could this possibly be so?

Why, too, is it the case that quotations can be made of Jerome, Origen and others of times as late as the fourth century A.D. that the Tetragrammaton was still to be found in copies of the Greek *Septuagint* translation of the **Hebrew** Scriptures, yet not a single statement can be produced from any early Christian writer saying that it ever appeared in any of the copies of the **Christian** Scriptures or New Testament? If the Tetragrammaton could be found in a Greek translation of the pre-Christian Old Testament, why should it not logically be found either in some actual copy of the original Greek text of the Christian Scriptures or at least in one of the ancient translations thereof? If it had ever been there in the original writings, certainly God, who is credited with assuring the fidelity of its transmission to our present time, would have made

29 See also *Aid to Bible Understanding*, page 1110 (or *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, page 318); *"All Scripture Is Inspired of God and Beneficial,"* pages 318, 319.

certain that it was preserved—at least He would have if he attached to it the supreme importance that the Watch Tower Society attaches to it. The fact that it was not preserved in any ancient text of the Christian Scriptures or even in any of the earliest translations thereof weighs heavily against its ever having been there in the first place.

Testimony of the Existing Scriptures Themselves

Even supposing that one felt inclined to accept the argument of the Watch Tower Society in justifying its insertion of the name "Jehovah" in the Christian Scriptures or New Testament—even if only in those cases where quotations are made from the Hebrew Scriptures—one would still be faced with some serious questions. Primary among these would be the fact that, *even in the Watch Tower's own translation*, with its distinctive insertions, there are *entire letters written by apostles* in which the name "Jehovah" is completely absent, namely, Philippians, First Timothy, Titus, Philemon and the three letters of John. Any of Jehovah's Witnesses must honestly acknowledge that it would be completely unthinkable for any prominent individual in the Witness organization to write on a spiritual matter without employing the name "Jehovah" with frequency. To write letters of the length and content of Paul's letter to the Philippians, or his first pastoral letter to Timothy and that to Titus, or to write three separate letters of admonition and exhortation on crucial issues like those dealt with by the apostle John—to write these and not make repeated use of the name "Jehovah" would lay one open to suspicion of apostasy among Jehovah's Witnesses. Yet in their own *New World Translation* the name does not appear in *any* of these seven apostolic letters and their discussion of vital spiritual issues. Even from the standpoint of the *New World Translation*, one must say that in writing these letters the apostles Paul and John clearly did not conform to the norm predominating within the Watch Tower organization. Or, more correctly put, the norm predominating within the Watch Tower organization does not conform to the first century apostolic viewpoint.

The complete absence of "Jehovah" in the *New World Translation* of these seven apostolic letters gives yet more evidence that the insertion of that name in the other Christian Scriptures is purely arbitrary, not something called for by the evidence.

Secondly, even if we were to accept the numerous insertions made by the translators (more accurately, the translator, Fred

Franz) of the *New World Translation* of the name "Jehovah" in the Christian Scriptures, we are still faced with the fact that the original writers of those Christian Scriptures referred to the name of God's Son with far greater frequency. The name "Jesus" appears 912 times, hence far outnumbering the 237 insertions of the name "Jehovah."[30] This too is strikingly different from the practice found within Watch Tower publications, where the ratio is at times just the reverse. Beginning particularly with Rutherford's presidency, those publications reveal a progressive increase in the use of the name "Jehovah," accompanied by at least a diminished reference to God's Son, Jesus Christ. Yet God himself has stated that it is His will that "all may honor the Son *just as they honor the Father*. He that does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him."[31] The writers of the Christian Scriptures clearly took that statement to heart and their example should be followed, not discounted under the claim that it does not fit the needs of our time.

The evidence is, then, that the practice found within the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses as to repetitive use of, and emphasis on, the Tetragrammaton in actuality reflects more the practice existing within the nation of Israel in pre-Christian times than it does the practice within the congregation of Christ's followers in the first century. If there is no justification for this "turning of the clock back," then how are the many Scriptures calling on us to proclaim and honor God's name to be fulfilled? To determine this, the following question must be considered:

Why the Change from Pre-Christian to Christian Times?

As has been shown, despite all claims and theories, there is simply no solid evidence to show that the Tetragrammaton appeared in any of the Christian Scriptures outside of its four appearances in abbreviated form in Revelation. The historical evidence, some of it evidently reaching back to within a few decades of the time of Paul's writings, is forcefully to the contrary. In view of the abundant appearance of the Tetragrammaton in the pre-Christian (Hebrew) Scriptures, with its thousands of occurrences there, this change is indeed remarkable. Faced with the known evidence, the question is, how can such notable change be understood? What effect does this have on our taking to heart and applying the many Scriptural exhortations to praise, honor and sanctify God's name?

30 "Christ" appears an additional 530 or so times (though often in combination with the name "Jesus"). On the composition of the New World Translation Committee, see *Crisis of Conscience*, page 56, footnote 16.

31 John 5:23.

To understand this we need first to understand what the expression "name" means in the Scriptures and what is actually referred to by God's "name." We often limit the expression "name" in our thinking to a *word* or *phrase* that distinguishes one person or thing from another, what is generally called "a proper noun" or an "appellation," such as "John," "Mary," "Australia," and "Atlantic." This is the most common use of the term "name" in everyday speech and is often its sense in the Scriptures. Yet "name" can apply in a number of other ways. In the late 1960s, when the Watch Tower Society's *Aid to Bible Understanding* (now *Insight on the Scriptures*) was being prepared, I was assigned to write articles for it on the subjects of "Jehovah" and "Jesus Christ" and "Name." At the time I saw no reason to question seriously the Watch Tower teachings about a widespread use of the name "Jehovah" among first-century Christians, and I sincerely sought to uphold those views.[32] I was unaware of a number of factors discussed in this present writing; other factors simply did not enter my thinking because my mind was directed toward upholding the organization's teachings rather than in weighing and assessing their validity. But in researching the three subjects mentioned, one thing did come home to me more clearly than ever before, and that is the fact that the word "name" can have a far broader, more vital sense than is commonly assigned it. That understanding became the foundation for realizing how narrowly limited my view of numerous scriptures had been and eventually for recognizing that the organization's application of them was often unjustified.

"Name," for example, can refer, not to a particular distinguishing "proper noun," but to a *reputation* or *personal life record*. When we say a person "made a good name for himself," or "a bad name for himself," we are referring not to the word or phrase that is used to identify him, such as "Richard" or "Henry" or "John Smith," but to the reputation he has gained. The goodness or badness of his "name" has nothing to do with either his given name or his surname. Similarly, when we say that, because of some wrongful course, a person has "lost his good name," we are not talking about a name in the common, literal sense, but in a far larger sense. So, a man might be known by the name "Mr. Christian Goodman" and yet, in this broader sense, have a "bad name." That latter "name" is obviously of greater importance than the name or appellation commonly designating him, for it deals with what he himself actually ***is*** and has ***done***. This broader, deeper sense of the word "name" appears often in the Scriptures.[33]

32 These same articles appear in the later *Insight on the Scriptures* virtually unchanged.
33 Proverbs 10:7; 22:1; Ecclesiastes 7:1, are but a few examples.

"Name" can refer to the *authority* by which something is done. That is what we mean by the expression "in the name of the law," or "in the name of the king." The "law" has no particular "name" in the ordinary sense, and it is not a reference to some name such as "Henry" or "Louis" or "Ferdinand" that is meant by "in the name of the king," but rather the kingly *authority and position* appealed to as basis for the demand made. At Ephesians 1:21, the apostle speaks of government, authority, power and lordship and "every name named." This shows clearly that "name" often represents authority and position.[34] In an article on the holy Spirit, the January 15, 1991, issue of the *Watchtower* (page 5), the organization is in effect obliged to acknowledge this sense of the word "name" in its explanation of the sense of the expression at Matthew 28:19, "baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit." Since there is no "name" in the common, ordinary sense, given to the holy Spirit, it is evident that the term is used here in a different sense. As early as the December 15, 1944 *Watchtower* (pages 371, 372) the statement was made:

> Baptism into the Son's name <u>means more than just into the literal name of the Son, Jesus Christ; just as name stands for more than its literal meaning</u>. The name carries with it all the honor, authority, power and office that the Father has laid upon the Son.

What is true of the "name of the Son" as compared with the literal name "Jesus Christ" is equally true of the "name of the Father" as compared with the literal name "Jehovah."

This same expression, "in the name of," can therefore also mean that the one claiming to speak or act "in the name of" another, claims authority to *represent that person.*[35]

Ultimately, then, in speaking of one's "name" the true reference may be, not to just a word or phrase used to designate an individual, but to *the person himself*, his personality, qualities, principles and record, what he himself ***is***. (Somewhat similarly, when we appeal to someone "in the name of mercy" we refer to all that the quality of mercy represents and stands for.) It can therefore rightly be said that, even if we know the name by which a person is called, if we do not know him for what he actually is, we do not really know his "name" in the true, vital sense.

In preparing the article "Jehovah" for the *Aid* book, I included the following quotation from Hebrew scholar, Professor G. T. Manley:

34 Compare Matthew 10:41 where the Greek literally reads "in the name of a prophet"; (see *Kingdom Interlinear Translation*), see also Philippians 2:9-11; Hebrews 1:3, 4. The May 15, 1985, issue of the *Watchtower* (page 17) quotes Isaiah 62:2 and the words addressed to Israel, "You will actually be called by a new name," and then says, "That 'name' refers to the blessed condition into which these modern-day disciples have been gathered."

35 Compare Exodus 5:23; Deuteronomy 10:8; 18:5, 7, 19-22; 1 Samuel 17:45; Esther 3:12; 8:8, 10; Acts 3:16; 4:5-10; 2 Thessalonians 3:6.

> A study of the word "name" in the O[ld] T[estament] reveals how much this word means in Hebrew. The name is no mere label, but is significant of the real personality of him to whom it belongs.[36]

To "know God's name," then, means far more than simply knowing a certain word that designates him. Writing of those who claim that Exodus 6:2, 3, indicates that the Tetragrammaton or the name "Jehovah" first became known in the time of Moses, Professor of Hebrew D. H. Weir writes:

> [They] have not studied [these verses] in the light of other scriptures; otherwise they would have perceived that by *name* must be meant here not the two syllables [Yah weh,] which make up the name Jehovah, but the idea which it expresses. When we read in Isaiah, ch. lii. 6, "*Therefore my people shall know my name*"; or in Jeremiah, ch. xvi. 21, "*They shall know that my name is Jehovah*"; or in the Psalms, Ps. ix. [10, 16], "*They that know thy name shall put their trust in thee*"; we see at once that to know Jehovah's name is something very different from knowing the four letters [YHWH] of which it is composed. It is to know by experience that Jehovah really is what his name declares him to be. (Compare also Is. xix. 10, 21; Eze. xx. 5, 9; xxxix. 6, 7; Ps. lxxxiii. [18]; lxxxix. [16]; 2 Ch. vi. 33.)—*Imperial Bible Dictionary*, Vol. I, pages 856, 857.[37]

Because of coming to recognize this far deeper meaning of the term "name" in the Bible, when writing the article "Jehovah" for the book *Aid to Bible Understanding*, I included this statement (page 1202):

> For an individual to know God's name signifies more than a mere acquaintance with the word. (2 Chron. 6:33) It means actually knowing the Person—his purposes, activities and qualities as revealed in his Word. (Compare 1 Kings 8:41-43; 9:3, 7; Nehemiah 9:10.) This is illustrated in the case of Moses, a man whom Jehovah 'knew by name,' that is, knew intimately. (Ex. 33:12) Moses was privileged to see a manifestation of Jehovah's glory and also to 'hear the name of Jehovah declared.' That declaration was not simply the repetition of the name "Jehovah" but a statement about God's attributes and activities. "Jehovah, Jehovah, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abundant in loving-kindness and truth, preserving loving-kindness for thousands, pardoning error and transgression and sin, but by no means will he give exemption from punishment, bringing punishment for the error of fathers upon sons and upon grandsons, upon the third generation and upon the fourth generation." (Ex. 34:6, 7) Similarly, the song of Moses, containing the words "for I shall declare the name of Jehovah," recounts God's dealings with Israel and describes his personality.—Deut. 32:3-44.

36 *Aid to Bible Understanding*, page 885. In discussing the name of God in the Hebrew Scriptures, Geerhardus Vos, in *Biblical Theology* (1959, pages 76f) similarly states: "In the Bible the name is always more than a conventional sign. It expresses character or history." In harmony with this, the February 1, 1945, *Watchtower* (page 41) first reviewed the position and authority of the Father and then stated: "One cannot be baptized validly unless having and making a recognition of these facts as to Jehovah's name, which name stands for what he is."

37 See also *Aid to Bible Understanding*, pages 888, 889; the same material appears in *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, pages 12, 13.

When Jesus Christ was on earth, he 'made his Father's name manifest' to his disciples. (John 17: 6, 26) Although having earlier known that name and being familiar with God's activities as recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures, these disciples came to know Jehovah in a far better and grander way through the One who is "in the bosom position with the Father." (John 1:18) Christ Jesus perfectly represented his Father, doing the works of his Father and speaking, not of his own originality, but the words of his Father. (John 10:37, 38; 12:50; 14:10, 11, 24) That is why Jesus could say, "He that has seen me has seen the Father also."—John 14:9.

This clearly shows that the only ones truly knowing God's name are those who are his obedient servants. (Compare 1 John 4:8; 5:2, 3.) Jehovah's assurance at Psalm 91:14, therefore, applies to such persons: "I shall protect him because he has come to know my name." The name itself is no magical charm, but the One designated by that name can provide protection for his devoted people. Thus the name represents God himself. That is why the proverb says: "The name of Jehovah is a strong tower. Into it the righteous runs and is given protection." (Prov. 18:10) This is what persons do who cast their burden on Jehovah. (Ps. 55:22) Likewise, to love (Ps. 5:11), sing praises to (Ps. 7:17), call upon (Gen. 12:8), give thanks to (1 Chron. 16:35), swear by (Deut. 6:13), remember (Ps. 119:55), fear (Ps. 61:5), search for (Ps. 83:16), trust (Ps. 33:21), exalt (Ps. 34:3) and hope (Ps. 52:9) in the name is to do these things with reference to Jehovah himself. To speak abusively of God's name is to blaspheme God.—Lev. 24:11, 15, 16. [38]

We can understand this by the fact that the term "name" is used in an identical way with reference to God's Son. When the apostle John writes, "But to all who received him, *who believe in his name*, he gave power to become children of God." John is clearly not referring just to the name "Jesus."[39] He is referring to the *person* of the Son of God, to what he ***is*** as the "Lamb of God," his divinely-assigned position as Ransomer and Redeemer and Mediator on behalf of mankind. Recognizing this, in place of "believed in his name," some translations read, "[did] believe in *him*" (*An American Translation*), "truly believed in *him*" (*Phillips Modern English*), "yielded *him* their allegiance" (*New English Bible*).[40]

Would the mere use of the name "Jesus," or even a very frequent pronouncing of the name, or a constant calling attention to that literal name, prove anything as regards one's being a genuine believer in Christ, a true follower of his? Obviously, none of these things would of themselves demonstrate that one is actually a Christian. Nor would they mean that one was truly "making known the name" of God's Son in the real sense of Scripture. Millions of persons today regularly

38 The same material is found in Insight on the Scriptures, Vol 2, pages 466. 467.
39 John 1:12.
40 Somewhat similarly, the 1988 Watch Tower publication, *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, page 280, in discussing Revelation chapter 19, verse 12, and its reference to the written "name" assigned to Christ, which "no one knows but he himself," acknowledges that this "appears to stand for the position and privileges that Jesus enjoys during the Lord's day," hence not to any name in the common, everyday sense of the term.

employ and speak the name "Jesus." Yet many of them grossly misrepresent and in fact obscure the true and vital "name" of God's Son because their conduct and course are so very far from reflecting either the teachings, the personality, or the way of life he exemplified. Their lives do not demonstrate conduct consistent with faith in his power to provide redemption. That, and not the use of a particular word or proper noun, is what is involved in 'belief in his name.'[41]

The same is true of the use of the name "Jehovah." No matter how often individuals, or an organization of people, may voice that literal name (claiming a special righteousness by their repeated use of such name), if they do not genuinely reflect, in attitude, conduct and practice, what the Person himself is like—His qualities, ways and standards—then they have not truly come to "know his name" in the Scriptural sense. They do not really know the *person* or personality represented by the Tetragrammaton.[42] Use of that name would then amount to no more than lip service.[43] If they claim to speak "in his name" yet misrepresent what He himself states in his own Word, or make false predictions "in his name," or devise and impose unscriptural legislation and rules "in his name," or make unjust judgments and condemnations "in his name," then they have, in effect, "taken his name in vain." They have acted in a way that neither has his authorization, nor reflects his qualities and standards and what He himself is as a Person.[44]

The same is likewise true of using some form of the Tetragrammaton for sectarian purposes, employing it as a means to distinguish one religious group from other religious groups. The evidence is that the name "Jehovah's Witnesses" developed in response to such an interest. Similarly "to praise his holy name" or "to sanctify his name" does not mean simply to praise a particular word or phrase, for how could one 'praise a word' or 'praise a title'? Rather, it clearly means to praise *the Person himself*, to speak reverently and admiringly of Him and his qualities and ways, to view and respect Him as Holy in the superlative sense.

The Conclusive Way of Identifying the True God

Obviously, it is necessary that the Person praised be identified. But to do this one is not limited to the use of just one specific designation. The apostles and disciples of Christ Jesus who wrote the Christian Scriptures referred to God as "God" in the vast majority of cases. While in about 22 cases they used the term "Lord" in conjunction with "God,"

41 Compare Matthew 7:21-23; Romans 2:24; see also the article on "Jesus Christ" in *Aid to Bible Understanding* under the heading "The full significance of his 'name,'" page 924; the same material is in *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol 2, page 61.
42 Compare Ezekiel 36:20.
43 Compare Hosea 8:1, 2; Matthew 15:8.
44 For a further discussion of this aspect, see Chapter 11, pages 385-387.

and some 40 times accompanied the term "God" with reference to the "Father," in some 1,275 other times they simply said "God." They clearly felt no need or compulsion regularly to preface that term with some other name, such as "Jehovah." The whole context in which they wrote made clear as to whom they were writing about.

Thus, while acknowledging the fact that there are "many 'gods' and many 'lords'" who are worshiped, the apostle goes on to say that "there is actually to us one God, the Father, out of whom all things are, and we for him, and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things are, and we through him."[45] We may note that even in the rendering of the *New World Translation*, the apostle Paul did not feel a need here to employ the Tetragrammaton to identify the true God from the numerous gods of the nations. (In this, again, he fails to reflect the viewpoint and practice of the Watch Tower organization today.) Some, in fact, might have construed the Tetragrammaton as pertaining solely to "the God of the Jews." Paul's words at Romans 3:29, show that he sometimes found it necessary to clarify that the God of whom he spoke was not thus limited. When he spoke to the Athenians who worshiped many deities, he clearly identified to them the true God, but *not by any use of the name "Jehovah," "Yahweh"* or similar form of the Tetragrammaton.[46] If there is concern over avoiding any confusion of identity, it is undeniable that no designation more clearly identifies the true God than that of "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," found frequently in apostolic writings.[47]

The Revelation of God's True Name Through His Son

When we as humans make known our personal name to others, to that extent *we reveal ourselves* to them—we are no longer anonymous. Such revelation also has the effect of producing *a more intimate relationship* between persons, eliminating to some degree the sense of being strangers to one another. As has been shown, however, it is when such persons come to know us for what we *are*, what we *stand for*, the *qualities* we have, what we *have done* or *are doing*, then only do they know our "name" in the more important sense. The personal name we carry is in reality little more than a symbol; it is not the "name" of real importance.

In revealing Himself to his servants and others in pre-Christian times, God used, predominantly though not exclusively, the name represented by the Tetragrammaton (YHWH). But the revelation of his "name" in the true, crucial and vital sense came through the

45 1 Corinthians 8:5, 6.
46 Acts 17:16-34.
47 Romans 15:6; 2 Corinthians 1:3; 11:31; Ephesians 1:3; Colossians 1:3; 1 Peter 1:3; 2 John 3

revelation of Himself to them as a Person, supreme, almighty, holy, righteous, merciful, compassionate, truthful, purposeful, unfailing in his promises. And yet the revelation accomplished at that time was minor compared to that which was to come.

It is with the coming of the Messiah, God's Son, that the majestic revelation of God's "name" in the full sense arrives. As the apostle John says:

> No one has ever seen God; it is the only Son, who is nearest to the Father's heart, who has made him known.[48]

Through his Son, God reveals himself—His reality and personality—as never before. By means of this revelation He also opens the way for our entering into a unique intimate relationship with Him, of children with a Father, not only sons of God but heirs, joint heirs with his Royal Son. Thus John also says of those putting faith in God's Messiah, Jesus Christ: "However, as many as did receive him, to them he gave authority to become God's children, because they were exercising faith in his name."[49]

A few years after the *Aid to Bible Understanding* book was completed, the research I had done in connection with the sense of the word "name" provided the basis for an article appearing in the February 15, 1973 issue of the *Watchtower* titled "Why Does 'Faith in the Name' of Jesus Christ Bring Life?" and another in the May 1, 1973 *Watchtower*, titled "What Does God's Name Mean to You?" *Virtually all the points relative to the deeper sense of the term "name" that have thus far been considered are presented in those articles*. Among other things, the second article cited discussed Jesus' prayer on the night before his death, in which he said to his Father:

> I have made your name manifest to the men you gave me . . . watch over them on account of your own name which you have given me . . . I have made your name known to them and will make it known.[50]

After asking in what way Jesus 'made God's name known' to his apostles, the article quoted the following comment in Albert Barnes *Notes, Explanatory and Practical, on the Gospels* (1846):

> The word *name* [in these verses] includes the attributes, or character of God. Jesus had made known his character, his law, his will, his plan of mercy. Or in other words, he had revealed God to them. The word name is often used to designate the person.[51]

48 John 1:18, *JB*; the *NEB* rendering is similar.
49 John 1:12; see also Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:4-7.
50 John 17:6, 11, 26.
51 Several translations demonstrate recognition of this, so that in rendering the above verses of John chapter seventeen, rather than "I have made your name manifest," they read, "I have revealed you" (*NIV*); "I have made you known" (*TEV*), "I have brought you honor" (*PME*), "I have revealed your real self" (*An American Translation*).

After that quotation this *Watchtower* article then made the following comments:

> So, as Jesus 'explained the Father' by his own entire perfect life course on earth, he was really 'making God's name known.' He demonstrated that he spoke with God's full backing and authority. Jesus could therefore say: "He that has seen me has seen the Father also." God's "name" thus took on greater meaning to his early followers.

While this *Watchtower* article of May 1, 1973, contained a number of statements that reflected many basic views of the Watch Tower organization that are actually sectarian in nature, nonetheless I believe it is true to say that as a whole it accurately pointed to the Biblical sense of the word "name." The article regularly stressed that doing things in "God's name" meant far more than the mere use or pronunciation of the name "Jehovah." It might be of interest to persons today to review that material. Though what I wrote in this article was approved by the organization for publication, and though, to my knowledge, never refuted, the *Watchtower* magazine has never since contained information of this kind. Its articles manifest an almost total disregard for the principle there presented with Biblical support.[52]

In condemning those whom it would classify as "apostates," the *Watchtower* magazine cites as one "proof" of their "apostasy" that they do not give the same importance to the use of the name "Jehovah" as does the Witness organization. In addition to what has already been presented here, there is much more evidence that shows that, if the Watch Tower organization's use of the term is the right one, exemplifying the proper honor for God's "name," then this would also make Christ and his apostles "apostates."

The Designation Preferred by Christ

In comparison with the 6,800 or more references to "Jehovah," the pre-Christian Hebrew Scriptures contain only about a dozen cases where God is referred to, or addressed, as "Father." Even in these cases, the term is used principally with reference to God's relationship with Israel as a people, and not of his relationship to the individual.[53]

It is, then, only with the coming of God's Son and his *revelation* of his Father that this intimate relationship really comes

52 I also wrote the following article in that issue titled "The Superlative Role of Christ Jesus in God's Purposes," which similarly discusses the Scriptural evidence as to the way in which God's Son "made known" the Father (pages 261-263).

53 Compare Deuteronomy 32:6, 18; 1 Chronicles 28:6; 29:10; Psalm 2:7; 89:26; Isaiah 63:16; 64:8; Jeremiah 3:4; 31:9.

to the fore. The *New World Translation* of the Christian Scriptures inserts the name "Jehovah" into those writings 237 times, doing so without sound basis. Yet, even with this essentially arbitrary introduction of something not found in any ancient manuscript of the Christian Scriptures, the reference to God as "Father" is still more prominent, for He is called, or addressed, as "Father" some **260 times** in those Christian writings—this without any need for an arbitrary introduction of the term by translators.

Contrary to the common practice of Jehovah's Witnesses when addressing God in prayer Jesus consistently addressed Him, never as "Jehovah," but always as "Father" (employing that expression six times in just his final prayer with his disciples). Even in the *New World Translation*, never once in any of his prayers is Jesus found addressing or referring to his Father as "Jehovah."[54] Hence, when he prays to his Father, saying "Father, glorify your name," it is evident that the term "name" is here used in its fuller, deeper sense, as representing the Person himself. Otherwise the complete absence in Jesus' prayers of a specific appellative, such as "Jehovah," would be inexplicable.[55] When with his disciples the final night before his death, both in talking to them and in a lengthy prayer Jesus referred to God's "name" four times.[56] Yet in that entire night, filled with counsel and exhortation to his disciples and in prayer, *not a single occurrence is found of his employing the name "Jehovah."* Rather he consistently employed the designation "Father," doing so some *fifty times*! When dying the next day, he did not cry out using the name "Jehovah" but said, "My God, my God," and in his final words said, "Father, into your hands I entrust my spirit."[57] As Christians, whose example, then, should we follow? That of a twentieth-century religious denomination or that of God's Son, manifest at such a crucial time?

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, had he followed the practice developed among Jehovah's Witnesses by the Watch Tower organization he would have taught them either to address their prayer to "Jehovah God" or to have included that name somewhere in their prayer. Instead, he taught them to follow his own example and address their prayer to "Our Father in the heavens."[58]

In our family relationships we do not normally refer to or address our father as "John," "Richard," or "Herman" or whatever his given name is. To do so would give no indication of the relationship we enjoy with our parent. We address him as "father" or the more intimate "papa" or "Dad."

54 Matthew 11:25, 26; 26:39, 42; Mark 14:36; Luke 10:21; 22:42; 23:34, 46; John 11:41, 42; 12:28; 17:1, 5, 11, 21, 24, 25.
55 John 12:28.
56 John 17:6, 11, 12, 26.
57 Matthew 27:46; Luke 23:46.
58 Matthew 6:6-9; compare John 15:16; 16:26, 27.

Those outside that relationship could not use such term. They must restrict themselves to a more formal address involving a particular given name.

Thus, with those who become children of God through Christ Jesus, the apostle says, "Now because you are sons, God has sent forth the spirit of his Son into our hearts and it cries out: *Abba* [an Aramaic expression meaning "papa"], Father!'"[59] This fact undoubtedly plays a major part in explaining why the undeniable change came, with the pre-Christian emphasis on the name "Jehovah" passing to the Christian emphasis on the heavenly "Father," for it is not only in prayer that Jesus made that term his expression of choice. As a reading of the gospel accounts makes evident, in all his speaking with his disciples he consistently and primarily refers to God as "Father." It is only by coming into and deeply appreciating the intimate relationship with the Father which the Son has opened up to us that we can truly say that we know God's "name" in the full and genuine sense.[60]

The Tetragrammaton Finds Fulfillment through God's Son

There is, however, yet another aspect that may shed light on this definite change in emphasis. The name represented by the Tetragrammaton (YHWH=Yahweh, Jehovah) is from a form of the verb "to be" (*hayah´*). Some scholars believe it is from the *causative* form of that verb. If so it would mean literally "He who causes to be, who brings into existence."[61] This would harmonize with God's response to Moses' question about His name, saying, according to some translations, "I will be what I will be."[62] While many translations here read, "I am that I am," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (Vol. 2, page 507) says of the rendering:

> "I will be who/what I will be" . . . is preferable because the verb *haya* has a more dynamic sense of being—not pure existence, but becoming, happening, being present—and because the historical and theological context of these early chapters of Exodus shows that God is revealing to Moses, and subsequently to the whole people, not the inner nature of His

59 Galatians 4:6; Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15.

60 Compare Matthew 11:27. In his treatise, Rud Persson demonstrated the abundant use of "surrogate" or substitute words to refer to God on the part of the Jewish people, including Jesus himself and those who thereafter became Christians. Thus we regularly find the expression "the kingdom of God" stated as the "kingdom of heaven," with "heaven" standing for "God." (We do not find the expression "Jehovah's kingdom" even in the *New World Translation*.) His treatise presented a host of examples where, if the view advanced by the Watch Tower organization were true, we would certainly expect the ones speaking or writing to refer to the name "Jehovah," but they instead used some other term.

61 *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, page 12; *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 2, page 507.

62 Exodus 3:14, *NIV*, footnote; *ASV*, footnote.

> being [or existence], but His active, redemptive intentions on their behalf. He "will be" to them "what" His deeds will show Him "to be."[63]

On this basis, it might be properly said that the name represented in the Tetragrammaton (Yahweh or Jehovah), with its emphasis on God's *purposes* for his people, finds its true fulfillment in and through God's Son. The name "Jesus" (Hebrew *Yeshuah*) itself means "Yah [or Jah] saves." In and through him *all the purposes of God toward mankind find their full realization*. All prophecies point ultimately toward this Messianic Son, making him their focal point. At Revelation 19:10, the angel tells John that "the witness to Jesus inspires all prophecy."[64] The fulfillment of those prophecies radiates out from him. Thus, the apostle can say:

> For no matter how many promises God has made, they are "Yes" in Christ. And so through him the "Amen" [meaning "certain," "true"] is spoken by us to the glory of God.[65]

This culmination of all God's promises and redemptive purposes in and through Christ Jesus may, then, give added explanation to the change that clearly is evident in the Christian Scriptures as compared with the Hebrew Scriptures in their mode of reference to God. It would explain why God purposely causes attention to be focused so abundantly on the name of his Son, and why his holy Spirit inspired the Christian Bible writers to do so. That Son is "the Amen," the "Word of God," the One who could say "I have come in my Father's name" in the full and most important sense of the word "name."[66]

Back at the time when the Israelites were traveling toward Canaan, Jehovah stated that he would send his angel ahead of them to guide them. They were to obey that angelic guide, he said, "Because my name is within him."[67] In a far greater sense did God cause his "name" to be in Christ Jesus during his earthly life. Thus some texts of the Hebrew Scriptures that contain statements related to "Jehovah" were applied in the Christian Scriptures to the Son, the basis for doing so evidently being that his Father had invested in him full power and authority to speak and act in His name, because this Son gave a

63 In connection with the *New World Translation* rendering "I shall prove to be what I shall prove to be," *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. 2, page 12, says: "This reveals Jehovah as the One who, with progressive action, causes himself to become the Fulfiller of his promises. Thus he always brings his purposes to realization. Only the true God could rightly and authentically bear such a name."

64 *Phillips Modern English* rendering. See also 1 Peter 1:10-12.

65 2 Corinthians 1:20, *NIV*.

66 Luke 13:35.

67 Exodus 23:21. Recognizing the Biblical sense of the word "name," instead of "*my* name is in him," the *New English Bible* here reads, "*my authority* rests in him," and *An American Translation* renders the same phrase with, "I will manifest *myself* in him."

perfect *revelation* of the Father's personality and purpose in every way, and because the Son is the royal and rightful Heir of his Father.[68]

In all these ways then—by his unique and unsurpassable revelation of God, by making known as never before his Father's personality and purpose and dealings, and by his opening the way to the relationship of sonship with God—Jesus Christ made known and glorified the true and vital "name" of his Father in the heavens. In prayer to his Father on the night before his death, having truthfully said "I have glorified you on the earth, having finished the work you have given me to do," he could then rightly say, "I have made your name manifest to the men you gave me out of the world. . . . Holy Father, watch over them on account of your own name which you have given to me, in order that they may be one just as we are."[69]

Arbitrary Insertion Obscures Scriptural Teachings

One of the most serious aspects of this matter is that, by its arbitrary insertion of the name "Jehovah" in numerous cases where the manuscripts read "Lord" (Greek, *kyrios*), the *New World Translation* often seriously detracts from the glorious role and position the Father has assigned to his Son. Consider the apostle's discussion in Romans 10:1-17. The whole thrust of this section of Paul's letter is on faith in *Christ*, that Christ is "the end of the Law, so that everyone exercising faith may have righteousness," and Paul discusses "the 'word' of faith that we are preaching," saying, "if you publicly declare that 'word in your own mouth,' that *Jesus is Lord*, and exercise faith in your heart that God raised him up from the dead, you will be saved." Yet, in spite of the complete focus on faith in Christ as Lord in all the surrounding context, when the *New World Translation* comes to verse 13, setting aside the fact that the Greek text uses the word for "Lord," the translator here inserts the name "Jehovah," so that the text reads, "For 'everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved.'" True, this identical expression is found at Joel 2:32, and there speaks of calling on the name of "Jehovah." But does this *demand* that a translator override the textual evidence from the ancient manuscripts of the apostle's writings, or does it give him the *right* to do so, replacing the term

68 Compare Hebrews 1:10-12 with Psalm 102:1, 25-27; Romans 10:13 with Joel 2:32. See Matthew 23:39; John 1:14, 18; 5:43; 10:25; 16:27; 17:1-4; Colossians 1:15; Hebrews 1:1-3. Not that Jesus thereby ***became*** or ***was*** Jehovah, for Christ himself quoted texts from the Hebrew Scriptures in which that name clearly applies to the Father, as in applying Isaiah 61:1, 2 and Psalm 110:1. (See Luke 4:16-21; Matthew 22:41-45.) If Christ *were* Jehovah, then we would be faced with a senseless picture of Jehovah 'anointing' himself and 'sending' himself to preach, of Jehovah 'speaking' to himself and telling himself to 'sit' at his own right hand, as related in those texts.

69 John 7:4, 6, 11; see also the May 1, 1973 *Watchtower* article previously mentioned on the subject "The Superlative Role of Christ Jesus in God's Purposes."

"Lord" with "Jehovah"? The question should be, What does the **context** show and what do the rest of the Scriptures show?

The Christian Scriptures make obvious that "calling upon the name" of the Son in faith and "calling upon the name" of his Father are not in any sense mutually exclusive actions. Both before and after Paul's quoted statement, the apostle had discussed that God's purpose and will is that salvation should come through his Son, the Christ. Since the Son came "in his Father's name," to "call upon the name" of the Son for salvation is simultaneously a calling on the name of the Father who sent him.[70] God revealed himself through his Son, so that he that saw the Son was, in effect, seeing the Father.[71] Again and again Christ's disciples spoke of putting faith in Jesus' "name," in the deeper, more vital sense of the term.[72] At Pentecost, after having quoted the *same expression* from Joel's prophecy quoted by Paul, Peter told the crowd that they should be "baptized in the *name of Jesus Christ* for forgiveness of sins."[73] He later declared to the Sanhedrin that "there is no salvation in anyone else, for there is not another name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must get saved."[74] When speaking to Cornelius and others, Peter said of Christ, "to him all the prophets [which would include Joel] bear witness, that everyone putting faith in him gets forgiveness of sins through his name."[75] At the time of Saul of Tarsus' conversion, Ananias spoke in vision to Christ of "those calling upon your name," and when Saul (or Paul) later related the event, he quoted Ananias as saying that God had willed that he, Paul, should "see the righteous One and . . . hear the voice of his mouth," so as to be "a witness for him to all men" of what he had seen and heard. He states that Ananias next said to him. "Rise, get baptized and wash your sins away by your calling upon his [Christ's] name."[76]

In the face of all such evidence, why should any translator today overrule the most ancient textual evidence and take it upon himself to substitute "Jehovah" for "the Lord" in the apostle's statement at Romans 10:13? In numerous cases the context does clearly indicate that the "Lord" spoken of is God, the Father. But in other cases the context points more directly to his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. The altering of the text in Romans chapter ten is not an

70 Matthew 21:9, 23:39; John 5:43; note also the way in which the Christian writers manifest that honoring the "name" of the Son simultaneously shows honor to his Father, God, as at Colossians 3:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:12; 1 Peter 4:14, 16; 1 John 3:23.
71 John 1:14-18; 14:9.
72 Compare Luke 24:46, 47 and John 1:12; 2:23; 3:18; 20:31; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 1 John 3:23; 5:13.
73 Acts 2:38.74 Acts 4:12.
75 Acts 10:42, 43
76 Acts 9:14, 17, 21; 22:14-16..

isolated instance in which the *New World Translation*'s 237 insertions of "Jehovah" into the text (in place of the original language manuscript reading of "the Lord") has the effect of eliminating application to Christ when the context either indicates it or clearly allows for it.[77] If it is the will of the Father to glorify his Son, to give him an exalted name and cause that "name" to be the object of faith, why should any one of us disagree with His doing so? Similarly, if the Christian writers among Jesus' apostles and disciples, most of whom had been with him, had heard his words directly and knew first-hand the manner in which he himself referred to God, did not use the Tetragrammaton in their writings, why should we, in effect, take the position that they ought to have done so and assume the right to edit their inspired writings to include it? If we do so, are we truly showing respect for God's "name," submitting to his sovereign authority and will? Or are we showing instead a willingness to act outside that authority, taking matters into our own hands, while at the same time claiming to do so "in his name"?

Viewing Symbols in Their Proper Perspective

In view of all the Scriptural evidence and particularly the example of Jesus and his apostles, it seems clear that focusing on and intensely emphasizing the name "Jehovah" proves little as to the validity of any religion's claim for making known and sanctifying the "name of God" in its most important sense. The Christian Scriptures, as God has seen fit to have them preserved for us by means of thousands of ancient manuscripts, nowhere place focus on the Tetragrammaton in any form. They show that God's Son did not place emphasis on that designation, either in speech or in prayer, revealing instead that his designation of choice was "Father." They show that in their writings his apostles and disciples followed that same pattern. Reluctance to follow their example, perhaps even a fear of doing so, may be the result of yet another mistaken viewpoint, an error in value judgment.

Humans often commit the error of focusing on a symbol and failing to see and give importance to the greater thing of which the symbol is merely a representation. The flag of any nation, for example, is properly shown respect. The respect is due, not because of the cloth of which it is composed or particularly because of the design it bears, but because it is a symbol of the government and nation and ideals for which it stands. Yet some

77 Compare 1 Corinthians 7:17-23; 16:10; 2 Corinthians 3:14-18; Ephesians 2:19-22; 6:5-9; Colossians 3:22-24; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; James 5:14, 15. In these verses the context refers to Christ or at least clearly allows for his being the "Lord" spoken of, yet the *New World Translation* denies such application or even the possibility of it by replacing "the Lord" with "Jehovah."

commit the error of forgetting that such a national emblem always remains only a symbol; it is not in any way equal to what is symbolizes. They may profess great reverence for the symbol while by their conduct they degrade that for which it stands, "wrapping themselves in the flag" while engaging in speech and acts and deeds that are in violation of, or out of harmony with, the laws and principles on which the particular nation is founded. As Jehovah's Witnesses know, because of their scrupling against saluting any flag of any nation, some persons in the United States during the 1940s engaged in mob violence against them, viciously beating them, destroying their property. In doing so those persons betrayed the very laws and principles of the nation that the flag symbolizes, showed contempt for the provisions of its Constitution and judicial system. In the African nation of Malawi, the same unreasoning importance was attributed to a national party card and when, in submissively adhering to organizational teachings and policy, Witnesses refused to purchase this they were beaten, their homes were burned and they were forced to flee the country. In all such cases, the extreme and unbalanced importance placed upon the symbol itself contributed to acts which did not honor but which degraded that for which the symbol stood. The symbol can be altered or even replaced, yet that which it represents may remain the same.

In the field of religion, some show the same unbalanced view toward symbols. The Israelites repeatedly committed such error.[78] For centuries, Jehovah employed the ark of the covenant as a symbol of his own presence. The cloud appearing above the ark's cover (evidently providing a miraculous light) in the Most Holy of the temple similarly symbolized his presence.[79] To suggest that these things might someday cease to be would have then seemed sacrilegious to Israelites, something unthinkable. Yet the time came when God allowed both the ark of the covenant and the temple itself to be destroyed and the cloud in the Most Holy to cease for all time. The disappearance of these symbols in no way diminished his Person or his glory. Rather it demonstrated His *superiority* to such symbols themselves. They were all but a shadow of better, greater things, the realities.[80]

78 See, for example, Numbers 21:9; 2 Kings 18:4.
79 Exodus 25:17-22; Leviticus 16:2.
80 Hebrews 9:1-5; 10:1.

Because of the manner in which God's Son died, the cross has historically been used by Christian religions in general as a symbol of that death and what it signifies for mankind.[81] The apostle Paul spoke of that instrument (called "the torture stake" in the *New World Translation*) as representative of the very essence of the good news he proclaimed.[82] Yet some make such a symbol something sacred *in itself*, even going to the point of attributing near magical powers to it, as though that symbol were a charm capable of protecting them from harm and evil, from demonic powers. In thus superstitiously perverting the symbol they prove false to the Son of God, whose purpose on earth is summed up in that symbol.[83]

What is true of such symbols can also be true of a *word* that is used to symbolize a person, including the person of God. The name represented by the four letters of the Tetragrammaton (Yahweh or Jehovah) is worthy of our deep respect, for it figures with great prominence in the long history of God's dealings with men, and particularly with his covenant people of Israel, during the pre-Christian period. But the Tetragrammaton, however pronounced, remains only a symbol of the Person. We commit a grave error if we attribute to a word—even though used as a name of God—importance equivalent to that of the One it represents, and it is far worse if we view that *word itself* as a sort of verbal fetish, talisman or charm capable of protecting us from harm and evil, from demonic powers. By so doing we demonstrate that we have actually lost sight of the true and vital meaning of the "name" of God. We can make it something prominently exhibited, as a flag or a

81 I believe that the Watch Tower's debate over whether "stake" or "cross" is the proper term for the instrument of Christ's execution is really of little meaning. We know that Romans frequently ***did*** use a cross (as we now commonly know it) for purposes of execution. And even though in other contexts a cross may have had sexual connotations in those ancient times, it is perfectly obvious that *when used to execute people* there was nothing sexual implied. In the Watch Tower Society's insistence on the Greek term *stauros* as referring to "stake" or "pole" it ironically never mentions in this connection that poles were a very common phallic symbol and in that sense were *as much a sex symbol as the cross ever was*. See *Awake!* July 22, 1964, pages 8-11; the *Watchtower* August 1, 1974, pages 457, 458.

82 1 Corinthians 1:17, 18; Galatians 6:14; Ephesians 2:16; Philippians 3:18.

83 Compare Matthew 7:21-23. The person who wears a flag on his lapel admittedly proves nothing thereby as to the genuineness of his patriotism. The person prominently displaying a crucifix on his person likewise proves nothing definitive as to his Christianity. Some who do so must honestly admit that they would feel a sense of unease, even a degree of insecurity, if they should not have the crucifix on their person. Any person finding this true in his or her case should confront the issue as to whether such dependence on a symbol does not actually detract from that which is symbolized, robbing the reality of a measure of its importance.

crucifix are exhibited, but prove nothing as to the genuineness of our reverence for the true God.[84]

Some among Jehovah's Witnesses who have come to realize how far from the Scriptural teachings many of the organization's positions are, and even some who have come out of that organization, nonetheless express the feeling that God ***must*** do something to correct the situation. Because it calls itself "Jehovah's organization" they feel it is certain to receive special attention from God. In view of all the Scriptural evidence discussed, there is no reason to believe that the Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, has any greater concern for the religious movement named "Jehovah's Witnesses" than he has for any other of the world's religions which unquestionably claim to speak "in his name," including the "Church of God" movements, the "Church of Christ" movements, or for that matter, the Roman Catholic Church with its hundreds of millions of adherents. To think that God is obligated to take some special action to clean up the Watch Tower organization, while letting whatever problems and faults exist in all the thousands of other religions continue as they are, is not, I feel, based on any sound Scriptural reason. No people on earth were more intimately connected with the name represented by the Tetragrammaton (Yahweh or Jehovah) than the Israelite nation, those to whom the words, "You are my witnesses," were originally addressed. Yet God did not "straighten out" that nation, nor did his Son do so. The desire on their part (particularly that of the national leadership) for change was absent. The evidence is that it is similarly absent in the Watch Tower organization as an organization.

God's "taking out a people for his name" thus has far greater depth of meaning than merely the application of a nominative word, and our demonstrating ourselves to be among those sanctifying and proclaiming God's name calls for far more from us than simply the repetitive use of Yahweh or Jehovah or any other single term.[85] Just as it is easy to display or wave a flag, or wear or kiss a cross, but far harder to live in accord with the principles these are considered to stand for, so too it is relatively

84 Texts such as Psalm 33:21; 118:10, 11; Proverbs 18:10 and others which speak of trusting in God's name, resisting enemies in that name, and running into that name as a refuge, certainly mean placing faith in the *person* of which the particular name is only a symbol.

85 Acts 15:14.

easy to take on our lips a certain word as a name but far harder to honor that of which such word-name is solely a symbol. We genuinely honor and make known our Father's name in the true sense only if we live lives demonstrating ourselves to be his children, emulating Him in all we do, having his Son as our example.[86]

86 Matthew 5:43-48

15

The Greatness of the Good News

I am astonished at the promptness with which you have turned away from the one who called you and have decided to follow a different version of the Good News.—Galatians 1:6, *Jerusalem Bible.*

IT IS in the good news set forth in the Scriptures that Christian freedom finds its base. The very proclamation of that good news is a call to freedom. It would not be *good* news if it led anywhere else. Because of where it leads it is a "glorious good news," one that from its inception was a "good news of great joy," and no finer service can be performed for people than to share that good news with them.[1] It can bring them in far greater measure a freedom from fear, guilt and anxiety, replacing these with a growing confidence, hope and peace of mind and heart. To do this, however, that good news cannot be presented in an adulterated, humanly manipulated, form.

There is no question that Jehovah's Witnesses believe that they are part of an urgent effort to make the good news known worldwide. They believe that people's very lives depend on both hearing and accepting the message they bring. While the *depth* of this belief, and the *motivation* it produces, may and do vary from Witness to Witness, still it must at least be admitted that even as a whole Witnesses are more than mere churchgoers or passive listeners.

For most Witnesses, one of the strongest proofs that the Watch Tower organization is indeed the sole entity that God has approved as his instrument is the belief that this is the only organization on earth that is making known the "good news of the kingdom" and accomplishing the foretold "witness to all the nations" that is to precede the final end.[2] For some six decades the Watch Tower's

1 2 Corinthians 4:4; Luke 2:10.
2 Matthew 24:14.

teaching has been that the parable of the "sheep and goats," and the dividing of people of "all the nations" into two classes, with individuals' eternal destiny hanging in the balance, was being accomplished by the door-to-door work of Jehovah's Witnesses as they distributed the Watch Tower's literature and, to a greater or lesser degree, made return calls. While now acknowledging that the actual division and judgment of the "sheep and the goats" is yet future, that preaching work is still viewed as playing a vital role in the outcome for all persons.[3] In exhorting Witnesses to door-to-door activity, the organization frequently has made use of Jehovah's instructions to the visionary "man with a writer's inkhorn" in chapter nine of Ezekiel's prophecy, arguing that the only way that this symbolic person could have accomplished his mission to "put a mark on the forehead" of those who would escape the coming destruction would have been by going to *everyone*, mainly by reaching them in their homes.[4]

Here, too, the claim has been that Jehovah's Witnesses, *and only Jehovah's Witnesses*, were accomplishing this "marking" work worldwide. The 8,600 or so "anointed" among them were the modern-day "watchman class" and it was flatly stated that, "Of course, those refusing to listen to Jehovah's 'watchman' have no hope of survival."[5] Those who accept their message receive the lifesaving "mark" in their forehead or seat of intelligence. Witnesses are told that failure to share in that work can make them "bloodguilty" as regards those who die. All this witnessing, marking, dividing work, of life-or-death consequence, was to be fully accomplished during the lifetime of the generation already in existence in 1914. Witnesses received a constant flow of reports of numerical growth in various countries as evidence that this was all true, that their organization was, by itself and apart from all other religions, accomplishing this crucial global task.

How valid have been these claims and to what extent has the proclaimed goal been realized?

How Global is the "Worldwide Witness"?

From a small beginning in the United States in the late 1870s, Jehovah's Witnesses today are active in 212 countries and islands.

3 See the *Watchtower* of October 15, 1995, pages 18-28; see also *Crisis of Conscience*, Chapter 10, which relates the change in the major teaching regarding "the 1914 generation" which doubtless prompted the accompanying shift in teaching regarding the division of the "sheep and the goats."

4 Ezekiel 9:1-11; see the *Watchtower* of March 1, 1985, page 14.

5 The *Watchtower*, September 15, 1988, pages 14, 15.

The millions of hours spent annually in witnessing and the hundreds of millions of publications distributed in scores of languages are all clear fact. Had the Watch Tower organization been content to say that it has accomplished a noteworthy international proclamation of its own message there would be no reason whatsoever to disagree. But it went far beyond that by claiming that through it as an instrument, and through it alone, God is making the good news known to all mankind, fulfilling in this way the vision of the angel who has "everlasting good news to declare as glad tidings to those who dwell on the earth, and to every nation and tribe and tongue and people."[6]

An example of the organization's own self-image is found in the March 1, 1985, *Watchtower*, in an article titled "Shedding Forth Light Amidst Earth's Gloom," dealing with chapter sixty of Isaiah's prophecy. In discussing verses 8 to 11 of this prophecy, it applies the "shedding forth" of light as coming particularly from 1919 onward, mentions the diminishing number of "anointed" Witnesses, and then says (pages 16, 20):

> This aging group grows smaller, as one by one they finish their earthly course in integrity. About 9,000 now remain. But others, numbering into the millions, are flocking like doves to their "birdhouse holes," or "dovecotes," finding refuge in God's organization. ([Isaiah 60:8] *NW*; *The New English Bible*) They are like the flocks of doves seen in Palestine at certain seasons —flying just like a cloud, so numerous that they actually darken the sky.
>
> . . . Next, Jehovah addresses his organization, saying: "Any nation and any kingdom that will not serve you will perish; and the nations themselves will without fail come to devastation." [Isaiah 60:12] All prideful worldly nations and other opposers will be humbled at Armageddon . . . . Jehovah declares: "I will rock all nations, and the desirable things of all the nations must come in; and I will fill this house with glory." (Haggai 2:7) But persecutors, apostates, and other disrespectful opposers will be compelled to 'bow down' —acknowledging in chagrin that Jehovah's Witnesses do indeed represent God's organization —"the city of Jehovah, Zion of the Holy One of Israel." —Isaiah 60:12-14.

A following article titled "Jehovah 'Speeds It Up'" then lists examples of notable numerical expansion in various countries and in its conclusion says (page 22):

> We rejoice that in recent years, Jehovah has so wonderfully cared for the expanding of the Watch Tower branch facilities. Today, these branches are equipped to help massive flocks of "doves."

6 Revelation 14:6.

> Therefore, let all of us share in beaming forth the light of the Kingdom good news to millions more! Let us point all homing "doves" to the way of "salvation" behind the protective walls of Jehovah's organization and increase "praise" to him at its gates.

Jehovah's Witnesses have indeed enjoyed notable growth in many countries of the world, some areas producing a much greater and more rapid increase than others. As seen, great stress is laid on such expansion as convincing evidence of divine blessing. But is a religion's *numerical growth* ever a safe guide or indicator as to its being specially chosen by God?

It is never pointed out that other religions, such as the Seventh Day Adventists and the Mormons —religions that, like the Watch Tower organization, had their birth in the United States during the nineteenth century —have registered approximately the same rate of growth as that of Jehovah's Witnesses.[7] Obviously, if numerical growth were the criterion for determining God's approval and blessing, then the enormous worldwide growth of the Roman Catholic faith over a period of centuries, particularly from the fourth century forward, should be proof positive of its having enjoyed divine blessing. The standard used in validating its own claims is not, however, applied by the Watch Tower organization to other religions.[8]

If the goal were to achieve international status and membership, that goal has been attained. But if the goal was to reach *all mankind* with the Watch Tower's message before destruction arrived—in the 'few years' said to remain before Armageddon—then the results achieved fall very, very far short.

One need but consider that the population of China, now surpassing one billion persons, represents *one-fifth of the total world population*, and there are but a relative handful of Jehovah's Witnesses among that enormous population.

7 For example, in 1961 Jehovah's Witnesses reported 900,000 members, the Adventists 1,200,000 members. In 1984, Jehovah's Witnesses had increased to 2,800,000, the Adventists to 4,000,000. Mormons have grown in about the same proportion during the same period. A few years ago the Mormon Church (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) reported a membership of 6.2 million, of whom 2.2 million were located in about 115 lands outside the United States. The standards for determining "membership" certainly vary —Witnesses list only those who report time in "field service," while the other religions referred to include a broader scope —but whatever the standard, the fact remains that the *rate of growth* or *percentage of numerical increase* is approximately the same.

8 One might consider as just one modern example the religion called the Church of Jesus Christ begun in the 1920s by Simon Kimbangu in the African country of Zaire. Toward the close of the last century its members numbered nearly *7 million* in several countries.

There are about 25,000 Witnesses in India, but with its population of over one billion persons that still means just one Witness to about 43,000 persons. While the number of Witnesses in India is growing (at a rate of 3 percent in recent years), the population of India is also growing, at a rate of about 26 million people a year. Currently the *average* time spent in "field service" by each Witness in India comes to about one hour per day.[9] At that rate, even if divine judgment could be based on only *twenty minutes* of "witnessing" to an individual, the Witnesses still could reach only a little over *one percent* of the people in a year. But India's population annual growth rate is *three percent*. And a large part of the hours spent "witnessing" involve talking to the same persons on "return visits" and "home Bible studies" or simply in going back over "territories" covered previously. If all factors continued as now —the annual growth rate of India's population, the annual 3% increase of Witnesses —and if 80% of all hours spent were devoted strictly to contacting persons not "witnessed to" before, by the year 2014 the Witnesses would have reached only about half of India's population with such twenty minutes of a "life or death" judgment testimony. Moreover, that long period of opportunity simply does not fit the scenario the organization sets out, for Witnesses are regularly told that "we stand at the brink of the 'great tribulation.'"[10]

The ratio in Pakistan with its 141 million inhabitants is even more disproportionate (192,000 persons for each Witness).

The combined populations of China, India and Pakistan represent two-fifths of the world population—*two out of every five persons living on earth.* And only a tiny fraction of this enormous population has even the slightest acquaintance with the Watch Tower message. It would seem to be sheer egotism for any organization to believe that a righteous and loving God could base a life-or-death judgment of all humanity on such a terribly misbalanced and fragile basis.[11]

To all this one may add about 635 million more persons found in the predominantly Muslim countries of Arabia, North and West Africa, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Turkey, where again only a minute fraction of the population has been contacted. I recall that when visiting Morocco on a "zone overseer" trip in 1978, the Watch Tower missionaries there informed me that the Brooklyn headquarters had

9 This average is drawn from the combined hours of full-time "pioneers" and of "congregation publishers.

10 As in the *Watchtower* of March 1, 1985, page 21.

11 Figures cited in these paragraphs are drawn from the chart in the January 1 issues of the *Watchtower*, 2004.

strictly instructed that they should not attempt to witness to Muslims but should restrict their witnessing solely to the small, predominantly Christian, European population found in that country.[12]

Factually, Jehovah's Witnesses today are contacting at best about *one-half* of earth's population to any extent worthy of mention. In certain countries the coverage is intensive, and in the Western Hemisphere, Europe and some other lands Witnesses visit homes in some areas with a frequency that can be as often as every few weeks. Yet even in such countries, including the United States, in which the Watch Tower organization had its birth, the fact is that what is said at the doors is short, usually quite routine and almost always centers around the offer of certain literature. The great majority of people have only a vague idea as to what the organization teaches, what its message is about. One need but ask persons at random in such countries what they know of Jehovah's Witnesses to find that, though they may view Witnesses as basically good people, for a large percentage the only thing they know of the Witness religion is that they take literature from door to door, are at odds with other religions, and perhaps that they do not accept blood transfusions, or do not vote, or similar negative positions.

Because of a basic good-heartedness, many Witnesses feel disturbed at the thought that the destiny of either eternal life or of everlasting destruction is supposedly going to be decided through earth's population's response to their organization's public proclamation. The view has been advanced that the death (with no possibility of a resurrection) at Armageddon of hundreds of millions of people in countries like China or Pakistan or India, is justified by what is called "community responsibility."[13] But this does little to satisfy such concern. The claim that when a government does not allow the Watch Tower organization to be active in the country controlled by that government, the people —because they support the government —automatically share responsibility for the rejection of the Watch Tower organization and its message, comes across as a very contrived effort at justification for the everlasting destruction of these many hundreds of millions of persons, men, women and children. Particularly when the case is that the vast majority of the common people have not the faintest idea of what the Watch Tower organization's message is or perhaps are not even aware of its existence.[14]

12 This rule was so that they might avoid expulsion from the country as being guilty of proselytizing.

13 See the *Watchtower*, April 15, 1971, pages 285-287; June 15, 1965, pages 366, 367; *Awake!* , November 8, 1963, pages 27, 28.

14 See, for example, the *Watchtower* of November 15, 1957, pages 694, 695.

In somewhat similar line of reasoning is an expression made at a District Assembly held in New York in 1980 for French-speaking Witnesses (mainly of Haitian background) living in that area.[15] The Watch Tower's president, Fred Franz, spoke to the audience during the program and in his talk related an experience he had had with a man who had previously studied for the Roman Catholic priesthood and who was now studying with Jehovah's Witnesses. He told of this man's questions about Armageddon and his asking if it could really be true that "only those becoming Jehovah's Witnesses would survive Armageddon and that all others would suffer everlasting destruction." The president said his own answer was, "That's what the Scriptures seem to indicate." The man responded, "But even little children?" The president said he replied, "Well, little nits eventually become lice, and little rats grow up to become big rats." His recounting this experience and these replies before the entire assembly clearly demonstrated his belief that such view had validity.

Perhaps those answers might appeal to some, I cannot say. But I am sure they would prove deeply disturbing to others. I believe also that it is the self-centeredness of the organization's claims that obliges persons to come up with such extreme viewpoints, designed to give some semblance of validity to the dogmatic and exaggerated claims advanced about the importance of what that organization is doing.

It is that same extremely exclusivistic position taken that causes the organization to discount whatever any other religious affiliations have done or are doing as having any part in the proclamation of the "good news of the kingdom," or at least to minimize severely the importance of their efforts. In 1979, when accompanying Witness missionaries in house-to-house activity in the West African country of Upper Volta, I remember noting that they carried with them two or even three different translations of the Bible, due to the several African languages spoken by the population of Ouagadougou, the country's capital. I thought then of the fact that so much of their witnessing would have been severely limited, crippled, were it not for having such translations. Yet those translations had not come to them through the Watch Tower organization; they were produced by missionaries and translators of other religious affiliations. The achievement of translating the Bible, in whole or in part, into more than 1,900 tongues is truly remarkable.[16]

15 The assembly was held August 7-10 in the Long Island City Assembly Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses.

16 See *Awake!* July 8, 1990, page 28.

The Watch Tower Society calls attention to the *fact* of the achievement but is reluctant to acknowledge the *credit* due to those who accomplished it, simply because they were not Jehovah's Witnesses. Yet the Bible is the very source of the good news, the place where the good news, as preached by Christ and his apostles and disciples, can be read in its original, unaltered, unadulterated form.

In visiting not only Upper Volta (now Burkina Faso), but also Senegal, Mali, Ivory Coast and Benin, I found that in any of those lands—where the major religions are animism and Islam—Witnesses numbered only a few hundred at most. Yet on arriving at Cameroon I found more than 10,000 Witnesses there. Why the contrast? The major difference was that Cameroon had a far larger percentage of the population professing Christianity. That circumstance, however, was the result of the earlier missionary activity of other religious organizations, Catholic and Protestant, and had been accomplished before the Watch Tower organization ever appeared on the scene. And this situation is true in much of the world, that the degree of success of the Watch Tower activity in any country is often parallel to the extent to which other church organizations previously had introduced the Bible to that country. In virtually every place where Witnesses are found, other Christian affiliations had already been there and, to some degree at least, paved the way, especially in their translating the Scriptures. Where such church systems have not already laid a foundation, the Witnesses' efforts rarely bring any significant number of conversions.[17]

To make it appear that, once the apostolic period of the first century had ended, little of anything was accomplished as to the spread of the good news for the next seventeen centuries—until finally the Watch Tower organization appeared in the late 1870s—is to make Jesus' words at Matthew 28:18-20, seem quite hollow. His firm assurance to his followers in their disciple-making was that "surely I will be with you *always* [hence, at all times, continuously], to the very end of the age."

17 Even in China (where Witnesses have established a bare foothold) there are some 4,000 Protestant churches that have reopened since the violent Cultural Revolution of 1966-76. In all, *some 2.9 million Bibles have been produced in China just since 1980* , and the provision in 1986 by the United Bible Society of $5 million in printing equipment stepped up production markedly. In view of the strong governmental restrictions that remain, this is all the more notable. Yet the ones promoting and accomplishing this task are, according to Watch Tower doctrine, all classed as part of "Babylon the Great," the great seductress and violent enemy of Christianity.

How Effective a Witness?

> *If the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air.*—1 Corinthians 14:8, 9, *New International Version.*

Aside from the quantity and extensiveness of this witnessing activity, what of its *quality*? Mere figures on a chart do not reveal this.

Even on the surface, one can see obvious problems —that by far the majority of what is called "declaring the good news" is simply a presentation and distribution of books and magazines, the vast majority of which admittedly are never read.[18] During my fifty years of active service, I accompanied thousands of individual fellow Witnesses in many countries as they went from door to door. Only rarely did I feel that what they said to people could qualify as anything approaching an effective witness for Christianity. The claim for decades was that by such activity the division of people into classes of sheep and goats was being effected under angelic direction, with a life-or-death outcome in the balance. I cannot believe that a just God would ever judge any human's worthiness for salvation on the basis of his or her acceptance or nonacceptance of the door-to-door presentations I have heard —or, for that matter, those I myself made in conforming to the organization's "field service" instructions. The overall mental impression left with most listeners is unquestionably that of persons interested in selling religious literature or in advocating their particular sectarian beliefs.[19]

Equally significant is the general lack of serious concern to extend further aid to those visited (an attitude that has been endemic in the organization from as far back as I can remember). This is certainly not true of all Witnesses, but from a lifetime of association I can add my testimony to that of others already quoted that those of whom it is not are the exception rather than the rule. A

18 See the statements by highly-placed representatives quoted in Chapter 6, pages 188, 189, 198, 200, 203, to the effect that the reporting of hours and "placement" of literature are generally the goals of most "publishers."

19 Additional evidence for this ineffectiveness is undoubtedly seen in the remarkably great amount of time spent worldwide each year in comparison with the number of persons being baptized. During the ten years 1981 to 1990, it took an average of *3003 hours of field service* for every single person brought to the point of baptism. That is equivalent to a person's spending *8 hours a day for 375 days* in order to find and bring *one person* to baptism. The current average is more than double the average during the 1950s (then averaging 1283 hours of field service per person baptized).

predominant sense of satisfaction is manifest among most Witnesses once the "duty" of having spent an hour or more in some door-to-door witnessing is done; they have "put in their time" and that is evidently their major preoccupation. The great majority of those who accept literature are not revisited. While an enormous *quantity* of literature is distributed, the *effectiveness* of this mammoth distribution is remarkably limited.

One long time elder, responding to an organizational request for comments in the late 1970s, wrote to the headquarters:

> We have blanketed the United States of America with our literature, and to a lesser degree the rest of the world. When we honestly ask ourselves what proportion of the millions of books and magazines and booklets that we have published are ever read by the people, it would probably be alarming to us as to the few that have been.
>
> . . . Even among our brothers if we honestly look at the facts, probably less than half of the literature that comes into the homes of a dedicated family is ever read by most of the brothers.[20]

Another respected elder, similarly replying to an organizational request for observations, wrote:

> As discussed previously, our literature is not being read by the publishers [Witnesses] or the public. About one third of the publishers read the literature, far less of the public. In fact I have had several elders tell me they feel guilty placing the 384-page and 416-page books with the public, because they felt the books were a drudgery when we studied them on Tuesday nights; they would not read them a second time themselves, and they wonder how the public could ever have an appetite for them if it affected them that way.[21]

A very large part of the witness that *is* given, then, in effect goes "into the air," with no genuine, telling effect. It is as if the distribution of hundreds of millions of publications of itself supplies an organizational sense of accomplishment, with no real concern that the vast majority remains unread. Alternative methods or more effective methods of helping people than by door-to-door distribution of books and magazines are not explored, actually not even contemplated. A huge publishing system has been erected and it is steadily producing a great flood of literature that demands an outlet. The need to distribute takes precedence over other, more vital needs. In the past the organization's monthly field service paper,

20 Memorandum from Dallas F. Wallace, during his lifetime a prominent elder and a leading figure in the acquisition of property by the organization.

21 From memorandum submitted by Charles F. Leibensperger, March 1, 1978. He is a former headquarters staff member and still a prominent elder.

Our Kingdom Ministry, has at times promoted giving greater stress to the Bible itself in the house-to-house activity. But invariably after a few months articles appear reminding the Witnesses to keep on in offering the books and magazines and a return to the usual pattern of principal emphasis on literature placement takes place.

The good news about God's Son is called the "glorious good news."[22] To restrict its being made known to, or to equate its proclamation essentially with, the distribution of denominational literature of any religious system is to reduce immeasurably its grandeur, to trivialize and cheapen it rather than magnify it.

In discounting all that has been done by any other religious group in previous times, the *Watchtower* of May 1, 1981, page 17, states:

> Let the honest-hearted person compare the kind of preaching of the gospel of the Kingdom done by the religious systems of Christendom during all the centuries with that done by Jehovah's Witnesses since the end of World War I in 1918. They are not one and the same kind. That of Jehovah's Witnesses is really "gospel," or "good news," as of God's heavenly kingdom that was established by the enthronement of his Son Jesus Christ at the end of the Gentile Times in 1914.

As it itself acknowledges, the Watch Tower organization has its own special "kind" of good news, tied in inextricably with a certain date. This, however, raises the following question:

The Original Good News or an Altered Version?

Even more crucial than the previous factors discussed is the issue of whether the "good news of the kingdom" thus preached is the same "good news of the kingdom" preached by Christ and his apostles. We have a clear presentation of what Jesus' apostles understood to be the "good news." If one will simply take the Bible account and read the book of Acts and the various writings of the apostles, the contrast between their expression of the good news and that spoken at the doors by Jehovah's Witnesses is notable.

The Watch Tower message focuses on a good news that deals overwhelmingly with concerns about negative "world conditions" and the hope of early relief from the problems these bring, through

22 2 Corinthians 4:4.

the entrance of a perennially-at-hand "new world" directed by a new heavenly government.[23]

That unquestionably has great appeal, since it is normal for human nature to feel more immediate concern about existing external pressures that bring nagging difficulties. The thought of a *government* is predominant in the mind of Witnesses when they think of the "Kingdom," and their view of that government is notably similar to that of modern governments of our time.[24] The Watch Tower Society has, in fact, published both articles and talk outlines drawing parallels between the "Kingdom" and such governments, depicting the administrative, legislative, judicial and educational facets in both, including evidence of the Kingdom's being a functioning "government" since 1914 in its "providing and administering written laws" and "providing an educational program" to its subjects, as also the ability to "finance" such a program, and even comparing the present "population" subject to that government with the population of various small countries.[25]

It seems remarkable, in this connection, that Watch Tower writers can fail to see that their organization has done the same thing that they condemn in other religions, notably the Catholic Church. An article in the December 1, 1984, *Watchtower*, for example, speaks critically of Church father Augustine's equating the kingdom with the church on earth, and quotes this summary of the effect of that teaching (page 6):

> Through the ecclesiastical hierarchy Christ is actualized as King of the kingdom of God. The area of the kingdom is coterminous [having the same boundaries] with the frontiers of the Church's power and authority. The kingdom of heaven is extended by the mission and advance of the Church in the world.

Yet this is virtually identical with what the Watch Tower

23 The *Watchtower*, April 15, 1983, pages 16-21; May 1, 1982, pages 8-11. Though heavenly, it is to have earthly representatives, "princes," including prominent servants of God from the pre-Christian period and "qualified" men from among modern-day Witnesses. See the *Watchtower* of August 15, 1989, page 17; *Man's Salvation out of World Distress At Hand!* (1975), pages 360-365.

24 The concern to draw such comparison is doubtless implicit in the reference to the Kingdom as not simply a "government" but "a *real* government," an " *actual* governmental arrangement." See, for example *Reasoning from the Scriptures,* page 226; the *Watchtower*, May 1, 1982, pages 9, 10.

25 Examples may be found in *Shining as Illuminators in the World* (a 1977 manual for "pioneer" Witnesses) pages 108-110; and the *Watchtower* of June 15, 1988, page 5. The May 1, 1982 *Watchtower*, page 10, contains a picture of U.S., British and Soviet political capitals, and a mountain symbolizing the Kingdom, along with the caption, "As human governments are real, so is the heavenly Kingdom government." The *Watchtower* of January 1, 1991, page 4, states that in its numbers the Witness "nation" now outranks "some 60 of the 159 member nations of the UN."

organization has done, and in the minds of its members "seeking first the kingdom" means essentially supporting, being submissive to, and working for the expansion of the "visible organization." It boasts of the growing "population" within the frontiers of the organization and plainly expresses the view that their submission to the organization and its Governing Body equates with submission to Christ as King.[26] It constantly applies to itself Messianic prophecies originally spoken to the nation of Israel, God's "typical government." In the January 15, 1988, *Watchtower* , for example, we read (pages 16, 17):

> . . . joyfully they cry out: "You have added to the nation; O Jehovah, you have added to the nation; you have glorified yourself. You have extended afar all the borders of the land." (Isaiah 26:12, 15) In 210 lands around the earth, Jehovah continues to add sheeplike persons to his spiritual nation. Hundreds of thousands of new associates are being baptized . . . . More Kingdom Halls and Assembly Halls are being built. Watch Tower branches are extending their Bethel Homes and factories and are adding printing equipment. The growth is continuous!
>
> This expansion comes because the "Prince of Peace" is directing the affairs of God's people on earth. As Isaiah states earlier in his prophecy: "To the abundance of the princely rule and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom in order to establish it firmly and sustain it by means of justice and by means of righteousness from now on and to time indefinite. The very zeal of Jehovah of armies will do this." (Isaiah 9:6, 7) How grandly those words have been fulfilled today!

As the article itself states, the 'fulfillment' is seen, not in truly spiritual aspects, but in numerical growth—which brings more persons under the organization's authority —and organizational expansion in properties, buildings and equipment. Augustine's equation of the kingdom with the "church" is paralleled by the Watch Tower's equation of the kingdom with the "earthly visible organization."

The constant emphasis on the idea of "government" undoubtedly contributes markedly to the willingness of Witnesses to subject their thinking and their consciences to a religious system, to their acceptance of the imposition of a growing volume of "theocratic law," numerous organizational rules and policies that must be observed. It is advantageous to such an authoritarian arrangement for congregational elders and traveling representatives to be thought of, not simply as humble servants of Christ and fellow disciples, but as "government representatives"

26 See Chapter 12, pages 426-429.

empowered to administer the laws and policies of a functioning governmental system.[27]

Corollary to this emphasis on "government," the Watch Tower Society, at least from and after 1935, has developed what one French writer described as a gospel of "spiritual materialism," that is, an appeal to materialistic desires wrapped in spiritual terms. This is done by constant stress on the prospect of soon being able to enjoy endless material and physical benefits —with an abundance of choice food, with beautiful homes in lovely surroundings, with a return from the wrinkles, weakness and pains of old age to the vibrant health, beauty and strength of deathless youth —all this free from taxation, inflation, high costs of health and life insurance, accidents, disasters, crime and war. No sane person would fail to find such a prospect attractive. Any politician who could convince people he could effect such a change would win immediate election in any country. But the *motivation* for desiring such a problem-free, materially and physically ideal life actually demands no greater spirituality, certainly no greater *Christianity*, than that which moved Ponce de Leon to seek the fountain of eternal youth, or for the followers of Mohammed to desire the paradise of the "seventh heaven," with its very earthly kind of delights.[28]

The major problem in all this is that it is a greatly altered, embroidered, good news when compared with the good news that Christ's followers preached, as recorded in the Christian Scriptures. Their message, and the language they used, focused,

27 This aura of impressive governmental authority is enhanced by the teaching that "qualified ones" among these elders will become "princes" in the New Order. Jude's words about "disregarding lordship and speaking abusively of glorious ones" are also applied to "anointed followers who serve faithfully as appointed Christian overseers," and to "responsible men in the congregation," with warning against failure to show submission to these men as the "glorious ones" referred to. See the *Watchtower* of August 15, 1982, pages 28, 29; January 15, 1979, page 25.

28 *The Watch Tower Publications Index 1986-1989*, page 130, under "Kingdom" contains the sub-topic "blessings to earthly subjects." In its references one does find such items as the "fatherhood of Jesus Christ," "relationship with Jehovah," and "spiritual prosperity," but these constitute a very small fraction of the approximately 43 listings. Most of them are about subjects such as "babies healthy," "crime ended," "depression cured," "deserts blossom," "ecology restored," "economic management," "economic slavery ended," "food abundant," "forests restored," "handicaps removed," "natural forces controlled," "peace with animals," "pollution ended," "population equilibrium," "poverty ended," and so forth. The predominance of these listings reflects accurately the degree of emphasis placed on the promised satisfying of material and physical desires found in the magazines and books they refer to.

Unlike that proclaimed in the first century, the "good news" as presented by the Watch Tower organization is one appealing strongly to the physical senses and desires. Compare such texts as 2 Corinthians 4:16-18; Colossians 3:2.

Pictures from the 1982 publication *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, pages 157-162. These are typical of the appeal to physical desires made particularly from 1935 onward.

not on a "government," but on a *person*, the person of God's Son, Christ Jesus.[29] The expression "Christ's kingdom" primarily carries the meaning of "Christ's reign or dominion" or "Christ's kingly rule."[30] Since God is the sovereign source of Christ's kingship and since this is God's own arrangement, the expression "the kingdom of God" is often used as a synonym for the kingly rule of his Son.[31]

To speak of Christ's "kingdom" then is primarily to speak of Christ's "rulership," and if one keeps that in mind in reading Scriptural references to the "kingdom" a considerably different sense comes through from that found in Watch Tower publications. One has but to read the expressions of Christ's apostles to see that when they spoke of the "kingdom" it was predominantly in that sense which focuses on the person of the Son of God and his lordship. The expression "good news of the kingdom" means simply "the good news of Christ's rulership."

We find the expression "good news" more than one hundred times in all the Christian Scriptures. Among these, *only eight times* does the expression "good news of the kingdom" occur. In *all the other cases* the good news is either specifically stated to be "the good news about the Christ" (or similar expressions) or the context shows that the reference is to Him, the *person*, not to a "government."

The Foundation and Essence of the Good News

What did the apostles and other Christian writers emphasize in

29 Compare Acts 8:12 with Acts 5:42, 8:4, 5, 35.

30 The term "kingdom" as found in the Christian Scriptures comes from the Greek term *basiléia*, which does not have the modern sense of a "government" which the Watch Tower Society would like to give it. As the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* states, the term "refers to the ¯being or nature or state of a king, i.e., his dignity, and secondarily the expression of this in the territory he governs. The sense of dignity is primary in the LXX, Philo, and the NT." The focus is on a *person*, even as in Oriental lands the kingdom resided (as to power and authority) in the person of the king. Reference works as a whole combine to show that the sense is that of "kingship" or "reign," not the idea of a governmental *organization* as persons today think of it. While the meaning of the term *basiléia* may also refer to the *domain* in which the rulership is exercised, that sense is secondary.

31 Compare Luke 19:11-15; Revelation 12:10; it may be noted that in verses 12 and 15 of the passage in Luke the *New World Translation* renders *basiléia* by "kingly power," while in the footnotes of certain editions it shows the alternative rendering of "kingdom." The nobleman in the parable of Luke 19 did not travel to a far country to receive, and return with, a "government" but *kingship* and *kingly authority*.

describing that Messianic rulership and its effects? They consistently pointed to Christ's ransom sacrifice, his victory over kings sin and death on behalf of all mankind, the authority the Father has given to his resurrected Son to liberate from the wages of sin and death all those who put faith in him. *That was —and is —the good news the Bible itself brings us*. The Biblical good news does not draw attention to, nor is it tied up with, some date, whether 1914 or any other date, nor does it attract by offers of alluring physical and material benefits "just around the corner." It is tied up with an event, the event in which God's Son fulfilled his primary mission as the Messiah and gave his life on our behalf, thereafter being resurrected to God's right hand and serving as our advocate there.[32] Only for this reason could Paul say to the Corinthians, "I decided not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him impaled."[33]

That central event of the good news is an event of 1900 years past yet it remains the event of supreme importance for all of us today. The fact that our own personal realization of its full benefit is yet future in no way changes the fact that the most crucial event in human history took place back then and will not be surpassed by any future event. The future is, in fact, governed irresistibly by that past act. Whatever future benefits we yet receive are, in reality, aftereffects of that act.

The apostles plainly saw matters in this light, recognizing the overriding, overpowering finality and the determinative, preemptive nature of that event, Christ's death and resurrection, and the effect of placing faith in the reconciliation and redemption made possible thereby. Only thus could they have spoken as they did, speaking of themselves and fellow Christians as though *already* possessing the highest blessings and benefits made possible by that ransom sacrifice.

There is unquestionably a danger in focusing on the present to the detracting of the future fulfillment of God's promises. (Compare 2 Corinthians 4:8; 5:1-10) An example of this wrong viewpoint is presented at 2 Timothy 2:17, 18. (Compare also 1 Corinthians 15:12) Hope is a principal Christian element and hope relates to what is future. (1 Corinthians 13:13.)

There is nonetheless detriment in a failure to recognize the fact that many of God's promises have, in a spiritual sense, a *present* application

32 l John 2:1, 2; consider also Peter's preaching at Pentecost and when addressing Gentiles in the home of Cornelius, as recorded at Acts 2:14-36; 10:34-43.

33 1 Corinthians 2:2; compare 2 Timothy 2:8.

in the lives of Christians. The "sealing" or "stamping" of God's servants by his holy Spirit is presented as a "pledge" or "deposit" ("advance installment" [*AT*]; "token in advance," *[NW]*) guaranteeing their promised inheritance. (Ephesians 4:13, 14) This present application of many of God's promises has a faith-strengthening and hope-strengthening effect that merits serious recognition.

Obviously, the *complete* and *total* realization of the Christian hope still lies ahead. The apostle Peter thus writes of the "new heavens and new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise."[34] At the same time, both he and other writers of the Christian Scriptures speak of many of God's promises as already undergoing fulfillment toward believers, either actually or in a spiritual sense. They were at one and the same time both spiritual *prospects* and spiritual *realities*, sometimes expressed as the "already-not yet" element of Scriptural presentation of these promises. While not losing from sight that the *ultimate* fulfillment is yet future, we can see that this *present* fulfillment is true of much —possibly even the entirety —of what is stated in the passage of Revelation 21:1-5 to which Witnesses regularly refer as describing a future "new world." They fail to realize that in the preceding Christian writings most of the things set out as produced by the "New Jerusalem" are also spoken of as, in a vital sense, *already in existence* at the time of those writings.[35]

Revelation 21:3, for example, speaks of the 'tent of God being with mankind, of his *residing with them* and their *being his people*, God himself *being with them*.' The Scriptures show that Christ's ransom sacrifice brought about the reconciliation of believing men and women with God, bringing them from a state of enmity to one

34 2 Peter 3:13.

35 Revelation 1:1 says of the revelation given to John that it was to show "the things that must shortly take place." Yet, while its visions frequently pointed to the future, particularly in connection with God's ultimate acts of judgment, a reading of Revelation demonstrates that many of the things stated had either already occurred or were then taking place. Chapters 2 and 3, as just an example, deal with conditions in seven Asia Minor congregations, conditions that were current at the time, not something future. The visions in chapter 4 of God's celestial glory, of the sacrificial lamb and his purchase of mankind, were not of future circumstances or events but of circumstances and events that were then in effect. The "river of the water of life" of Revelation chapter 22 was certainly then flowing, so that the invitation to "anyone that wishes" to come and "take life's water free" did not need to wait till the distant future but was already being extended to people through the making known of the good news. (Revelation 22:1,2, 17; compare John 4:7-14; 6:35; 7:37, 38.) Only by comparing the visions with that which is stated elsewhere in the Christian Scriptures can the present or future element and application be determined, for it is a sound rule that the symbolic must always be understood by, and conform in meaning to, that which is factually and clearly stated elsewhere, never the other way around.

of peace and friendship with God.[36] For that reason the apostle could speak of Christians *at that very time* as "a temple of a living God" in which "God's spirit dwells," a "place for God t*o inhabit* by spirit," and could quote the prophecy of Isaiah where the very same expression is found at Revelation chapter twenty-one:

> Just as God said: "I shall reside among them and walk among them, and I shall be their God, and they will be my people.[37]

The apostle presents this promise of God's dwelling with men and their becoming his people as having attained fulfillment; he did not present it as something future but as a relationship *already in effect.* His fellow apostle, Peter, clearly states, "You were once not a people, but *are now God's people*."[38] Because of Christ's sacrifice, and the reconciliation with his Father it made possible, in the first century the "tent of God" was indeed with men and He was now residing among them and they were His people, even as depicted in the Revelation account.[39]

In the Revelation account, verse 4 states that God "will *wipe out every tear* from their eyes, and *death will be no more*, neither will *mourning* nor *outcry* nor *pain* be any more." The first portion of this verse, as to God's wiping out every tear and death being no more, exactly corresponds in content to the words of Isaiah 25:8. At 1 Corinthians 15:54 the apostle Paul quoted from that part of Isaiah's prophecy, not as pointing to some earthly paradisaic conditions (as the Watch Tower publications regularly do), but with regard to the resurrection of Christians and their passing from mortality to immortality. Yet, in a sense, the 'victory over death' had already been gained for them, its "sting" had been annulled. Though Christians were still subject physically to death, in a very vital sense they were beyond its power and could remain beyond it by maintaining faith in Christ's superior ransoming power. They knew that God had 'made them alive' though they were previously 'dead in their trespasses and sins.'[40]

36 Romans 5:10; 8:7; Luke 16:9; compare James 2:23.
37 2 Corinthians 6:16; see also 1 Corinthians 3:16; Ephesians 2:22.
38 1 Peter 2:10.
39 We may also note that in Hebrews chapters 8 through 10 the inspired writer shows that the earlier earthly tabernacle, in which God was symbolically present among his people Israel, pictured God's greater, heavenly "tent" and says that this was as "an illustration for the appointed time <u>that is now here</u>." (Hebrews 9:9) He goes on to make plain that the heavenly tent was already in place and that Christ, as high priest "of the good things <u>that have come to pass</u>," was even then ministering there on behalf of sinful mankind. (Hebrews 9:11)
40 Ephesians 2:1.

Having died to sin and having been raised to "newness of life," for them the reign of "king death" had ended; through Christ's rulership they were no longer under "king death's" dominion and law.[41] For that reason the apostle John could say, "We know [not that we *will* pass over, but] that we *have passed over from death to life*, because we love the brothers."[42] In so saying, he was simply repeating Jesus' identical expressions in which Jesus spoke of those putting faith in him as already possessing everlasting life because of that faith.[43] That is evidently why Jesus could say, not only that "he that exercises faith in me, even though he dies, will come to life," but also that "everyone that is living and exercises faith in me will never die at all."[44] All these powerful statements are certainly the equivalent in force of the Revelation statement, "and death will be no more," and they all show that these results of Christ's ransom were already in effect among his followers.

As for *mourning, outcry* and *pain*, Christ had come precisely to carry out the commission foretold in earlier prophecy, namely "to preach good news to the poor . . . to bind up the brokenhearted . . . to comfort all who mourn, and provide . . . the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of despair."[45] He did not fail in that commission and could say in the synagogue in Nazareth, "Today this scripture *is fulfilled* in your hearing."[46] His promise, "Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh," did not need to wait until the distant future to begin having fulfillment, even as the other parts of the Sermon on the Mount did not require that long wait to experience realization. Rather than express "*outcry*" upon suffering mistreatment at the hands of men, his disciples were to rejoice and leap for joy.[47]

Even the reference to the removal of "*pain*" does not require the fulfillment of this Revelation vision to be solely a future one. The context in no way specifies it to be pain such as often accompanies illness or physical trauma. The translation of the term used by the apostle John (Greek *pónos*) is itself a matter of the translator's choice, since the word basically means "toil" and *only by implication* "pain" or "anguish."[48] Thus the French translation

41 Romans 5:21; 6:4.
42 1 John 3:14.
43 John 3:36; 5:24, 39, 40; 6:47; 20:31.
44 John 11:26; compare Romans 6:9-11.
45 Isaiah 61:1-3, *NIV*.
46 Luke 4:18-21.
47 Luke 6:22, 23; compare James 1:2, 9, 12.
48 See *The New Englishman's Greek Concordance and Lexicon*, page 738.

by D'Ostervald assigns it its basic sense, rendering it by *travail* (toil) and the Spanish translations by Nacar-Colunga and Bover-Cantera both render it by *trabajo* (work).[49] Christ gave the appealing invitation to all those "toiling and loaded down" to come to him and find—*right then, and from then onward*—refreshment and rest for their souls.[50] Their religious leaders had laid heavy burdens upon them through their rigid, unrelenting legalism and their stressing the gaining of a righteous standing with God by means of specific works. Jesus likened this to putting heavy loads on men's shoulders, something certainly painful to carry. The good news brought by God's Son enabled them to become free of all these burdens, free from the frustration and weariness of endeavoring to satisfy such burdensome requirements, and thus end the pain, both emotional and mental, such struggle brought.[51]

The expressions, the "*former things have passed away*" and "Look! I am *making all things new*," are likewise clearly paralleled by statements in the apostolic writings—with reference to a relationship and circumstance *then present*, not limited to some distant future time.[52] In almost identical language to that of Revelation, the apostle writes:

> Consequently if anyone is in union with Christ, he is a new creation; the old things passed away, look! new things have come into existence.[53]

How true those words were at that very time! An old covenant had been replaced by a new one, and God's laws were now written in the hearts of those joined to his Son. Though previously dead in sin Christians had been raised to live a new life, as if having had a new birth, serving in the new way of the Spirit and not in the old way of the written code; believers, both Jew and Gentile, were formed into "one new man" and reconciled with God, entering into the relationship of sons of God. A new force now molded their thinking and they cast off their old life course and clothed themselves with a new course, one constantly renewed in the likeness

49 The *Jerusalem Bible* renders it as "sadness."
50 Matthew 11:28-30.
51 Matthew 23:1-4; 12:1-13; 15:1-11; we may note that at Acts 15:10 the apostle Peter also speaks of the Law itself as "a yoke that neither our forefathers nor we were capable of bearing." Christ set them free from such heavy yoke.
52 Revelation 21:4, 5.
53 2 Corinthians 5:17.

of its Creator. No longer subject to and dependent upon some human priesthood in their approach to God, they could now draw near to God with full assurance by a "new and living way," opened to them by their one High Priest and Mediator, God's Son.[54] In all of the above cases the "already" and "not yet" factors apply with the hope of the ultimate realization yet to be fulfilled, but with that hope greatly fortified by the dispensations *now in effect*.

Transferal into the Kingdom

What a marvelous change Christ's sacrificial act had produced for his disciples and what a marvelous entry into a genuinely new relationship it introduced. Christ does indeed have a spiritual "nation" over which he rules, but it is composed of all persons on earth who have put their faith in Him and who render submission to *Him* as the spiritual *Head* and as the sole *mediator* between themselves and God.[55] Organizational subjection and boundaries and numerical growth have nothing to do with this. Nor are they related to the fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies. These *have* indeed seen fulfillment, but in a more extensive and far different way than the Watch Tower organization's explanations present.

This transferal of God's servants into Christ's kingdom is in no way tied in with organizational affiliation, nor with the date 1914. It extends all the way back to the first century and Christ's providing redemption through the sacrifice of himself . The Scriptures show that his disciples had even then been "delivered from the authority of darkness" and " *transplanted into the kingdom* of the Son of his love."[56] The apostle Paul could therefore say of God:

> He raised us up together and seated us together in the heavenly places in union with Christ Jesus.[57]

He did not speak of this as future but used the past tense—"raised," not "will raise"; "seated," not "will seat"—in describing the spiritually lofty position that their transferral into "the kingdom of the Son of his love" had effected. Because of their delivery from "the authority of darkness" they were now as if seated with the heavenly king, God's Son.

54 Hebrews 8:7-10; 1 Peter 1:3; Romans 6:11; 7:6; 8:10-14; Ephesians 2:14-18; 4:22-24; Colossians 3:9, 10; Hebrews 10:19-22.
55 1 Peter 2:4-9; 1 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6.
56 Colossians 1:13.
57 Ephesians 2:6.

Jesus had said, "Happy are the mild-tempered ones, since they will inherit the earth . . . . Happy are the peaceable, since they will be called 'sons of God.'"[58] As a result of Christ's death and resurrection and their faith in the power of this, His followers had now become "sons of God" and therefore also became joint-heirs of Christ and heirs of God, to whom '*the earth and its fullness*' belongs.[59] Because they were now adopted into God's royal family, the apostle could speak *in the present tense* when saying to his fellow Christians:

> All things belong to you, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things now here or things to come, all things belong to you; in turn you belong to Christ; Christ, in turn, belongs to God.[60]

In similar vein, the apostle Peter wrote, also in present tense:

> You are "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for special possession, that you should declare abroad the excellencies" of the one that called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.[61]

They were not merely priests of God but "royal" priests, and the term "royal" in the Greek (*basileios*) is from the same root as the word for "kingdom" (*basiléia*). Peter states that the Christians to whom he wrote were already at that time a "kingly priesthood" or a "kingdom of priests."[62] At Revelation 1:6, John therefore employs the past tense in saying of Christ that "he made us to be a kingdom [made of us a royal house, *NEB*], priests to his God and Father." All this certainly must be considered in understanding later expressions in the book of Revelation, as when Revelation 5:10 says:

> You made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God and they are to rule as kings over the earth.[63]

58 Matthew 5:5, 9.
59 Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 3: 29; 4:4-6; 1 Corinthians 10:26; Psalm 24:1; 1 Corinthians 10:25,26.
60 1 Corinthians 3:21-23; Romans 8:17; Galatians 4:6, 7.
61 1 Peter 2:9.
62 This understanding of the Greek phrase is also indicated by the Greek *Septuagint* rendering of Exodus 19:6, where the Hebrew expression "a kingdom of priests" appears; see *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Vol. 5, page 57.
63 As the interlinear reading of the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures* shows, the verb rendered "to rule" is in the present tense in Greek: "they are reigning."

It may be noted that the *New World Translation* here reads "over the earth," yet the Watch Tower's own chart in the front of the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* shows that the Greek preposition here used (*epi*) has the fundamental sense of "upon" not "over" (Greek *hyper*). While *epi* can be rendered as "over" when the context calls for such a change from its fundamental sense, that change, as can be seen, is hardly a *required* one here. Virtually every other translation thus reads "*on* the earth" or "*upon* the earth."

Whatever the case, all the earlier-quoted apostolic statements clearly demonstrate that Christ's disciples on the earth were already "a kingdom and priests of God" in a spiritual sense. They were part of God's royal family, sons of the King, and the King's power acted on them and through them. Their royal position as sons of the King of the universe did not express itself in earthly majesty or material wealth, nor in any exercise of political power, or of dictating to others as though exalted above and superior to them.[64] But their Father, to whom "the nations are as a drop from a bucket; and as the film of dust on the scales," to whom "all the inhabitants of the earth are being considered as merely nothing, and [who] is doing according to his own will among the army of the heavens and the inhabitants of the earth," had, in his Sovereign authority, empowered them as his royal representatives to accomplish his mission on earth, to speak out his kingly decrees and judgments.[65] Long ago Jehovah commissioned Jeremiah to "be *over nations* and *over the kingdoms*, in order to uproot and to pull down and to destroy and to tear down, to build and to plant." He did that, not by placing Jeremiah as a literal ruler over them, but simply by 'putting his words in Jeremiah's mouth,' for God's word is powerful, irresistible, and what he foretells is as good as done.[66] Having spoken to mankind by prophets, God has now spoken to us by his Son and the word or message spoken by him was itself to serve as a "judge" toward all mankind.[67] That Son, from his ascension onward, has exercised "all authority in heaven and in earth," and his disciples and joint heirs on earth have the royal privilege of making his word known. Presented free from alteration or adulteration, that word has its own resultant judging effect.[68] As disciples of

64 Compare 1 Corinthians 4:8; Revelation 3:17, 18.
65 Isaiah 40:15, 17; Daniel 4:35; Acts 17:30, 31.
66 Jeremiah 1:9,10; Isaiah 55:11; 44:26; Romans 4:17.
67 Hebrews 1:1, 2; John 12:48.
68 Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 13:44-48; 28:23-28.

his Son, they serve in the confidence that God's sovereign power backs them and sustains them, and that there is nothing on earth that He cannot or will not use for their blessing and support, for they are part of his royal family. They will never lack anything they *truly need* to continue on and fulfill their purpose on earth; they will never lose anything of genuine and lasting value. For:

> If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all —how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? . . . No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.[69]

This is indeed the best of news for those who see the superior and crucial value of spiritual blessings. That genuine good news is, lamentably, obscured when people are instead encouraged to focus their thoughts and desires on essentially material benefits perpetually depicted as "just ahead" in a substitute good news of human conception.

Witnesses, if they give the matter any thought, can hardly fail to recognize that the good news as presented in the first century is a different version from what they are accustomed to hearing and reading and speaking at the doors, as if the original version had become somehow outdated, outmoded, not suited to the present. The apostle Paul said to the Corinthians that, when coming to them, he had "decided not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him impaled."[70] If any traveling Watch Tower representative today were to make such a statement he would immediately be viewed with suspicion as though of a different religion. If a speaker at a meeting were simply to paraphrase one of Paul's letters, such as his letter to the Ephesians, without first informing his audience that this is what he was doing, he, too, would be viewed as "sounding strange," speaking a different language than what his listeners were accustomed to and as though representative of a different religion. I believe anyone reviewing that inspired letter and thinking on the matter would acknowledge this as true.

69 Romans 8:31-39, *NIV*.
70 1 Corinthians 2:1, 2.

Remarkably little time is spent in consideration of the grand Christian teachings earlier presented, and this is not surprising since they are viewed as applicable to less than one per cent (actually only *two-tenths of one percent* [00.2%]) of the organization's total membership.

The Life-Changing Power of the Good News

Today's world and the existing political rule of earth undeniably produce many problems, irritations, frustrations, hardships, even sufferings, for us all. But all of them together pale by comparison with the disastrous, humanly inescapable and irremediable effects upon us of the rule of Kings Sin and Death.[71] In the first century the good news was that those placing faith in Christ's ransoming act might now become free from the burdening sense of guilt their sinful state had induced, that their sins were fully forgiven and they were reconciled to God and at peace and in friendship with Him. Far more, they were now accepted by Him into his family as His children, sons of the Most High.

The repetitive sacrifices made under the Law Covenant and by means of a special priestly class had constantly served as a reminder of sin, with its accompanying sense of guilt, and no matter how many sacrifices the people had made over the years there was always the realization that this was still insufficient to actually attain righteousness and the reward of life for them. But now with his one sacrifice Christ had put an end to any further need for sin-atoning sacrifices.[72] Now God's servants could offer up a totally different form of sacrifice, sacrifices of praise and of love. These were expressed, not in deeds done according to procedures and regulations, but in deeds which were motivated freely and spontaneously from the heart, with no sense of atoning for sin, or working off its debt and accompanying sense of guilt thereby. Those first-century Christians had entered into "God's rest," with such struggling, repetitive efforts at proving their own righteousness now a thing of the past.[73]

Before this, access to God's presence as symbolized in the Most Holy of the temple, was limited to the few, the priesthood. Anyone else attempting to draw near by entry therein did so at peril of his life. But now that Christ had become their High Priest in heaven at God's right hand, his followers could *all*, personally and individually, "have boldness for the way of entry into the holy place by the blood of Jesus" and were actually encouraged to "approach with freeness of speech to the throne of undeserved

71 Romans 5:21.
72 Hebrews 10:1-4.
73 Hebrews 4:3, 10.

kindness," *without having to rely on any human intermediaries in doing so.*[74] No more were they under a Law Code, one that constantly reminded them of their weakness and failure to measure up to its perfection, for now God's laws were written in their minds and hearts. They would no longer need a specialized priestly class to teach them to know Him, for they would all, "from the least one to the greatest one," know Him and He would no longer "call their sins to mind."[75] Service to Him could be, as never before, a genuine source of joy.

For the vast majority of Jehovah's Witnesses the power of the good news is regrettably robbed of much of its gladdening and strengthening force. The greatness of what God through Christ has already done for us, the overriding significance of Christ's victories over sin, death, the world and its ruler, the blessedness of the relationship opened up to all of mankind who will exercise faith in him, are seriously minimized. All this is the result of the organization's efforts to uphold its teaching of two classes of Christians, with one class, the immense majority, having no standing with God on their own but only by virtue of association with the other class. The original good news, and all that it offers now, is restricted as applying to just a few thousand persons and, in effect, is placed in the background and overshadowed by the gospel of "soon to be enjoyed," "just around the corner" material and physical benefits. The great mass of the membership are told that entrance into the New Covenant, and even the present full forgiveness of sins producing a righteous standing and sonship with God, are not yet for them. The Watch Tower teachings have, in effect, turned back the clock for them so that their situation remains much like that of persons before Christ's coming and ransoming act. It is as if these millions of the so-called "great crowd" class were still in the time of the Old Covenant when even within the nation of Israel the people were divided into a priestly and a non-priestly class. Thus the four million or so "non-anointed" are told that they have approach to God and a standing with Him only through having a relationship with the "anointed" currently of the organization.[76] This would mean

74 Hebrews 4:14-16.
75 Hebrews 8:10-13; Galatians 4:6-9.
76 Watch Tower publications have applied the words in Zechariah 8:23 as to 'ten men out of all the languages of the nations taking hold of the skirt of a Jew,' as applying to the "great crowd" of non-anointed persons who have figuratively taken hold of the skirt of the "anointed remnant" of Jehovah's Witnesses, and, utilizing Revelation 3:9, the publications say of these non-anointed ones that "They come to Jesus' anointed brothers and 'bow down' to them, spiritually speaking, because 'they have heard that God is with them,'" and they "minister to these anointed ones." See *Revelation —Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, page 60, 61; also the *Watchtower* of January 1, 1988, page 16; *Worldwide Security Under the "Prince of Peace"* (1986), pages 88, 89.

that these in effect thereby act as a priesthood mediating on behalf of all the others to make them acceptable to God. The offerings of service the latter make have no validity unless made in that context.[77] Christ is declared to be Mediator only for the 8,000 or so "anointed" remaining on earth, not for the millions of others associated.[78]

A Reversion to Old Covenant Circumstances

Under the Old Covenant, the priesthood served as a superior court where all difficult matters were to be decided, and their decisions were binding, as the Law stated:

> They must hand down to you the word of the judicial decision. Then you must do in accordance with the word that they will hand down to you from the place which Jehovah will choose; and you must be careful to do according to all that they instruct you. In accordance with the law that they will point out to you, and according to the judicial decisions that they will say to you, you should do. You must not turn aside from the word that they will hand down to you, to the right or to the left.[79]

No better description could be given of the view Jehovah's Witnesses today take toward decisions handed down to them by the Watch Tower organization and its Governing Body, who stand for them as if in the position of the Old Covenant priesthood. In *Crisis of Conscience* reference was made to an expression used by some traveling overseers who, after holding up a *green* Watch Tower publication, said that 'if the organization tells us this book is *black*, then, brothers, ***it is black!*** '[80] I would have thought that such a blatant advocating of blind credulity, a statement so utterly devoid of intelligence, would soon have disappeared, recognized for what it was and dying from its own stupidity. Yet years later persons who have corresponded with me and who are as yet associated with the organization relate this same expression being used in their area, not only in the United States but in other countries, including Australia.[81] Back in the year 1541, in his writing *Exercitia spirituali*, the founder of the Jesuit order, Ignatuius Loyola, wrote:

77 Contrast Exodus 30:30-33; Leviticus 2:1, 2; 5:10; 17:1-5; Numbers 4:15, 17, 18; 18:7 with 1 John 2:20; Hebrews 4:14-16; 8:1, 2, 10-12; 10:19-22; 13:15, 16.
78 The *Watchtower*, August 15, 1989, pages 30, 31.
79 Deuteronomy 17:8-13.
80 *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 344, 345.
81 The person who communicated this information from Australia immigrated there from Germany. He wrote that on hearing this expression of the organization's authority to make "green" become "black," stated by a district overseer at a meeting for elders, he murmured to himself, "Heil Hitler!"

> We should always be disposed to believe that that which appears to us to be white is really black, if the hierarchy of the Church so decides.

Today, few Catholics would agree with Loyola, yet these words describe the precise mentality developed among many, if not most, of Jehovah's Witnesses, particularly among its traveling overseers.

Another popular expression that has "caught on" with some traveling representatives and elders is, "If the organization tells us to jump, our only question should be 'How high?'" Similarly, to those who question the truthfulness and Scripturalness of certain teachings, the cliché, used in reply by some of these men is, "I would rather be wrong with the organization than be right and be alone." This surrender of all personal judgment not only says something of the type of persons who are viewed as "qualified" for responsibility by the organization. Because such incredibly shallow clichés and calls for blind, unthinking obedience are not forcefully repudiated by either the organization or by the great majority of hearers, it also reveals the degree to which the organization and its Governing Body now are viewed as equivalent to the priesthood of ancient Israel. Those expressions to all intents and purposes repeat the words of the Old Covenant, "You must not turn aside from the word that they will hand down to you, to the right or to the left." The organization with its Governing Body stands where the Aaronic priesthood stood. It is as if the liberating Messiah had not yet come.

In some respects the position of these millions of the so-called "great crowd" is *less* than that of non-priestly Israelites, for they are likened by the Watch Tower publications to "spiritual Gentiles." The Gentiles living in Israel, if approaching God's temple, had to stop at a wall in the Courtyard of the Gentiles, a wall containing the inscription "Let no foreigner enter inside of the barrier and the fence around the sanctuary. Whosoever is caught will be responsible for his death which will ensue."[82] Whereas, through his death, Christ tore down the wall dividing Jews and Gentiles, a wall that caused persons to be "excluded from citizenship in Israel and [to be as] foreigners to the covenants of the promise," the Watch Tower organization erects a new wall, spiritually dividing the "anointed spiritual Israelites" (today numbering some 8,600) from the spiritual Gentiles (numbering into the millions), and placing the latter in a figurative Courtyard of the Gentiles.[83] For a

82 See the *Watchtower* October 1, 1972, pages 606, 607; December 1, 1972, page 721, 722; *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. II, pages 1079, 1080.

83 Ephesians 2:11-18, *NIV*.

Gentile to cross the dividing wall in that courtyard was considered a desecration. For any "non-anointed" person to cross the spiritual "wall" the Watch Tower doctrine erects —as by partaking of the emblems at the Lord's evening meal (an act which Scripturally signifies nothing more or less than an expression of faith in the ransom sacrifice), or by viewing themselves as in the new covenant Christ mediated on behalf of mankind —would be treated as a similar "desecration," an invasion of a holy precinct.

Even the Christian Scriptures, they are told, were not written for, or directed to, them but for and to "the anointed." Paradoxically, all the *responsibilities* in those Christian Scriptures somehow *are* applied by the organization to these millions of "non-anointed" members, while the chief privileges are withheld. In a sense, the upside-down view of the organization makes it appear as if being a joint heir of Christ, a position only the so-called "anointed class" are said to occupy, is a privilege *less demanding in its requirements* than that of the "great crowd class." The "anointed" ones enter into their privileged position as justified sons of God right away, and at their death, in some cases after only a relatively few years of "service," have their inheritance assured and at God's day of judgment are immediately accepted into God's presence —not a thousand years later. Not so with the "great crowd" class. "Their time" has not yet come and, if they would see it, they must not only labor dutifully under the organization's direction but thereafter endure a "great tribulation." Nor is this the end, for after this they are in effect under trial for a thousand years, since the millennium is represented as a "thousand-year judgment day." Christ's sacrifice brought believers out from under law into God's undeserved kindness or grace. According to the Watch Tower view, those surviving Armageddon *go back under law*, as the book *"Babylon the Great Has Fallen!" God's Kingdom Rules!* states in its explanation of Revelation 20:12, 13:

> The "scrolls" that the apostle John saw opened are not the record of the past earthly life of the people standing before the judgment throne, but are the law books of Jehovah. That is, they are the publications setting forth his will for all people on earth during Christ's millennial reign. After what is written in these law "scrolls" has been published and made known, the people will be judged by what laws and instructions are found written in those scrolls "according to their deeds," not their deeds committed in this life or before the scrolls were published, but their deeds afterward as long as they are on judgment.

> All through the judgment day of a thousand years Jehovah's Judge, Jesus Christ, can execute the sentence of destruction on any human proving himself incorrigible. But by this judgment day all men will have the opportunity to learn righteousness. (Isaiah 26:9; 2 Peter 3:8) Even if they prove obedient and learn righteousness during the thousand-year judgment day of Christ, they will yet have to pass the final test of unswerving devotion to Jehovah's universal sovereignty after the thousand years are ended, at which time Satan and his demons will be loosed. Then they will stand without benefit of an intermediary before the One seated on the "great white throne," hence on their own responsibility. If they pass this decisive test with faithful obedience to Jehovah God, the Universal Sovereign, first then will he as the Supreme Judge of all write their names in the "scroll of life," thus authorizing them to enjoy perfect human life forever in the Paradise earth.[84]

It seems incredible that any organization can rationalize such an imaginative reversal of matters, or how they can justify their assuming the right to "adjust" the good news of the first century, in effect "rewriting the script" so as to accommodate it to fit the doctrinal system they have developed. Certainly the international proclamation, in which they replace the first-century good news with their own twentieth-century version thereof, does not qualify as fulfilling Jesus' prophecy about the preaching of the good news to all nations. When he said, "*This* good news of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world," he clearly referred to the good news as *he* presented it and as it was thereafter presented by his apostles and disciples, *not* some rewritten script of that good news to be found nineteen hundred years later only in publications and magazines of a particular religious movement. That original good news, heard in the first century, remains the "*everlasting* good news" that needs no updating, and is the basis for "the faith that was *once for all time* delivered to the holy ones."[85]

84 See *"Babylon the Great Has Fallen!" God's Kingdom Rules!* pages 644-46. The more recent book *Revelation —Its Grand Climax at Hand*, page 296, similarly says of the survivors of Armageddon, "their judging must continue through the thousand years as Jesus keeps on guiding them to 'fountains of waters of life.'"

85 Revelation 14:6; Jude 3.

16

An Appealing Promise, Unfulfilled

As when a hungry man dreams that he is eating, but he awakens and his hunger remains; as when a thirsty man dreams that he is drinking, but he awakens faint, with his thirst unquenched.—Isaiah 29:8, *New International Version.*

THE DISCUSSION that has preceded brings a measure of sadness—sadness at the picture of something that promised so much but has fallen far short of that promise. What has happened among Jehovah's Witnesses reminds me of thoughts expressed some decades ago by a member of the British parliament.[1] Explaining why his conclusion was that "the only categorization that really matters is that which divides men as between the Servants of the Spirit and the Prisoners of the Organization," he demonstrated the way in which the human spirit develops an idea and then, with the intent of giving substance to the idea, an organization is formed. As to what so frequently happens, he observed:

> Whether the organization be political, religious, or social is immaterial to my present argument. The point is that, the idea having embodied itself in organization, the organization then proceeds gradually to slay the idea which gave it birth. . . .
>
> [If a religious organization, its] message will crystallize into a creed. Before long, the principal concern of the church will be to sustain itself as an organization. To this end, any departure from the creed must be controverted and, if necessary, suppressed as heresy. In a few score or few hundred years what was conceived as a vehicle of a new and higher truth has become a prison for the souls of men.

1 W. J. Brown, who died in 1960; whether his expressions here quoted are from a speech or treatise, I have been unable to determine.

> . . . the idea having given birth to the organization, the organization develops a self-interest which has no connection with, and becomes inimical to, the idea with which it began. Now, the thing which permits this process of diversion to take place, so that the organization comes to stand for the opposite of the idea which originally inspired it, is the tendency of men and women to become Prisoners of the Organization, instead of being Servants of the Spirit . . . the organization becomes less the vehicle of the idea than a channel through which particular interests must be served.[2]

Human knowledge is a dynamic, expanding thing, both on a personal level and collectively. When beliefs become crystallized in the form of creeds or official teachings to which people are required to conform in order to perpetuate an organization, conflict inevitably results. It produces a dividing line between what the parliamentarian calls "Servants of the Spirit" and "Prisoners of the Organization."

The organization now known as Jehovah's Witnesses, from its beginning somewhat over a century ago, gave promise of much that was appealing. It sought to break with creed-bound worship of God, to return to the simplicity of first-century Christianity, free from formalistic ritualism, elitism, clergy-dominated thinking, sectarian dogmatism and intolerance. Emphasis instead was to be placed on a simple brotherhood, an unbiased attitude toward all sincere persons whatever their existing denominational affiliation, open discussion and a determination to let the message of God in the Scriptures be the final arbiter in all conclusions and decisions. In course of time it declared its goal to provide the means for people in all lands to receive education in those Scriptures and to benefit from the foundation of a faith based solely on the Biblical message, not on the traditions of men. It pointed people to a way of life that would be always God-directed and God-blessed, due to putting his Son's kingdom in the first place in their lives, lives lived in integrity, neighbor love, unstinting devotion to healthful spiritual values.

Those were the ideals. The reality is not the same. And, as Jesus admonished, we should "not judge by the appearance of things but by the reality."[3]

It is not that the goals were all discarded outright, or that no progress was made toward any of them. To take the view that there

2 Brown's words echo those expressed earlier by Dean Inge (1860-1954) who said: "Every institution, even the church, ends up by strangling the ideas it was founded to protect." (Quoted in *Good News Unlimited* magazine of October 1989, page 10.)

3 John 7:24, *PME*.

is nothing good whatsoever to be found in the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses and to engage, as some former Witnesses do, in a career of deriding it manifests only intense bias. When persons leaving do this it raises questions as to the purity of their motive in leaving. If there was *nothing good whatsoever* there, then why were they drawn to it in the first place, or why did they remain in it for five, ten, twenty or more years? Similarly with those of other religious affiliations—do they not realize that in many cases persons entering the Witness organization did so precisely because of their disillusionment with the churches to which they had belonged? Frequently the Witness organization wins persons' interest largely by default, the failure in certain areas on the part of many churches being as much a factor as the apparent benefits offered within the Witness organization.

People are often disillusioned by what they see as hypocrisy among many church leaders and members; they are confused by the multiplicity of denominational divisions and the sectarian spirit which contributes to such divisions. They are concerned about the nationalism expressed, the record of warfare within Christendom, the history of oppression of minorities, and the fact that political action has often been required to bring about racial equality within "Christian" communities.

One former Witness, living in northern Virginia, who joined a small church after her separation from the Watch Tower organization, related that she had "always been a worker when a Witness" and so she continued to be a worker in this small congregation. As a result they began giving her additional responsibility, and this continued over a period of about two years. She stated, however, that the farther 'up the ladder' they moved her, the more "church politics" she saw and she finally withdrew.

Similar disillusionment can and often does result in connection with movements developed by persons who have themselves left the Watch Tower organization. The same person just mentioned wrote of a phone call she received from a young woman in her area who had been disfellowshiped for 'having association with a disfellowshiped person.' The woman said she was so adversely affected by a voluminous legal packet sent to her by the Watch Tower Society's attorney, Leslie Long, designed to show that any legal action against the Society would be futile, that she decided to contact some former Witnesses. She first contacted a man whose name she had found through the news media. She related that she spoke with him by phone for close to two hours. As a result of his

insistent dogmatism in pushing certain "orthodox" doctrine and his concern for receiving money before mailing her any information, her comment was that she felt that 'if he had been her only contact with a former Witness she would go back to the Watch Tower organization.'

Another woman, living in California, wrote:

> Your book was a refreshing change from the JW-bashing, judgmental books written by embittered Witnesses. I can understand why some are bitter; I fight that myself, having spent 20 years in the organization.
>
> . . . I desperately need to talk with someone for emotional support but it's so hard to find balanced, non-judgmental advice from groups who seem to have as biased an agenda as the Witnesses themselves. . . . I've had enough closed-mindedness to last a long time.

A former Witness living in Indiana had—due to the repressive position of the organization—taken out a post office box under an assumed name, so as to be able to correspond safely with former Witnesses. She wrote:

> So many ex-JWs I have seen on TV and read their literature show an attitude that turns me off, perhaps it is smugness or vindictiveness. . . . I feel they are themselves guilty of the things they accuse the Watch Tower of: half-truths, lifting things out of context, etc.

I am sincerely grateful that, as has been true of many, she wrote this letter to me largely because of feeling that *Crisis of Conscience* expressed a different spirit.

Self-examination, then, should always precede critical assessment of another's position or claims; otherwise we can be focusing on the speck of sawdust in our brother's eye and failing to see the plank in our own.[4]

Some indeed focus on and magnify faults or errors found within the Witness organization which are essentially superficial. They see surface problems but fail to see the more consequential underlying problems. They condemn only in those areas where they feel that their own (generally opposite) position and claims will come off looking superior, to the advantage of the particular religious systems they advocate. They fail to see where the crucial principles involved may call for adjustments in their own attitudes, positions and claims. This resembles Pharisaism more than Christianity.[5] In

4 Matthew 7:1-5.
5 Matthew 23:25-28.

similar fashion, Witnesses when defending their organization often place great emphasis on what amounts to *appearance* more than *substance*, on *claim* as opposed to *reality*, perhaps on *intent* as compared to *actual result*.

There is, unquestionably, an enormous *potential* for good in an association with millions of members living in some two hundred lands. And that is what I find particularly tragic—the way in which the effort of sincere persons toward attaining noble goals, an effort marked not only in hours and days and years, but often in entire lives, is so measurably diverted into a channel that causes it to come pitifully short of those goals. The very instrument that is supposed to aid them in furthering those goals proves to be a most serious hindrance to their attainment. It has diverted "Servants of the Spirit" into being "Prisoners of the Organization." The organization has become "less the vehicle of the idea than a channel through which particular interests must be served."

The Spiritual Paradise

> *I say to everyone among you: do not be conceited or think too highly of yourself; but think your way to a sober estimate based on the measure of faith God has dealt to each of you.*—Romans 12:3, *New English Bible.*

At an international assembly of Jehovah's Witnesses in New York, held in 1958, the audience was told:

> It is the flourishing of the spiritual paradise that explains the overflowing happiness of Jehovah's Witnesses . . . . This spiritual paradise reflects the glory of God and testifies to the establishment of his kingdom.[6]

From that time forward Witnesses have been repeatedly assured that they form such a "spiritual paradise" and are the happiest, most united, and the cleanest-living people on the face of earth. Prophecies from the Hebrew Scriptures about the 'desert blossoming as the rose' and the land 'becoming like Eden,' are said to have had a modern-day spiritual fulfillment in the Witness organization.[7] In glowing word-pictures describing the splendor of conditions in this "spiritual paradise," the organization is portrayed as one of near perfect harmony, where 'former wolflike persons dwell peacefully with lamblike persons,' "humans discarding aggressive traits and

6 Quoted in *Awake!* May 22, 1987, page 15.
7 The *Watchtower*, October 1, 1983, page 5.

putting on personalities marked by peacefulness and love," with "no competitions, rivalries, ambitious self-exalting over others . . . no venomous backbiting or spitefulness," where all feed at a continual banquet of rich spiritual food in "a spiritually healthful place, in which the fruits of God's holy spirit are produced in abundance."[8]

Many of them believe this, particularly those who, as was true in my own case, have known nothing other than membership in the "New World Society." They come to view everything outside that society, including all other religious denominations, as largely devoid of genuine moral principle and of genuine love, or at least markedly inferior to the standards and levels their own organization claims to exemplify. Just how far they go can be seen in this statement in the March 15, 1986, *Watchtower*, page 20:

> Only in the spiritual paradise, among Jehovah's Witnesses, can we find the self-sacrificing love Jesus said would identify his true disciples. (John 13:34, 35)
>
> By their bad fruits, false prophets are exposed for what they really are. But Jesus indicated that the good trees would be identified by their fine fruits. (Matthew 7:15-20) And what fine fruitage we have in the spiritual paradise! Amazing increases are taking place in practically every country. . . .
>
> Because they are taught by God, Jehovah's Witnesses really produce the fruits of Christianity in their lives. . . . Only they have an organization that completely abides by what God's Word has to say on sexual immorality, abortions, drunkenness, stealing, idolatry, racial prejudice, and other worldly pursuits and practices. And they alone are the ones obeying the command to preach the good news of Jehovah's Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) God's own Word unquestionably points to Jehovah's Witnesses as the one organized people that have his blessing.

Though told that this is 'unquestionable,' we owe it to the interests of truth to ask how factual the organizational self-estimate just expressed really is? The claim is not that they are *somewhat* better or *measurably* better or an *improvement* on other religions. The claim is of being *outstandingly* better, of actual *exclusivity* in these fields. They are "unquestionably" the sole spiritual oasis in a world desert. In view of the exhortation found in the apostle Paul's words at Romans 12:3 earlier quoted, urging against thinking more highly of oneself that is warranted, how sober an estimate does the organization's published self-image prove to be?

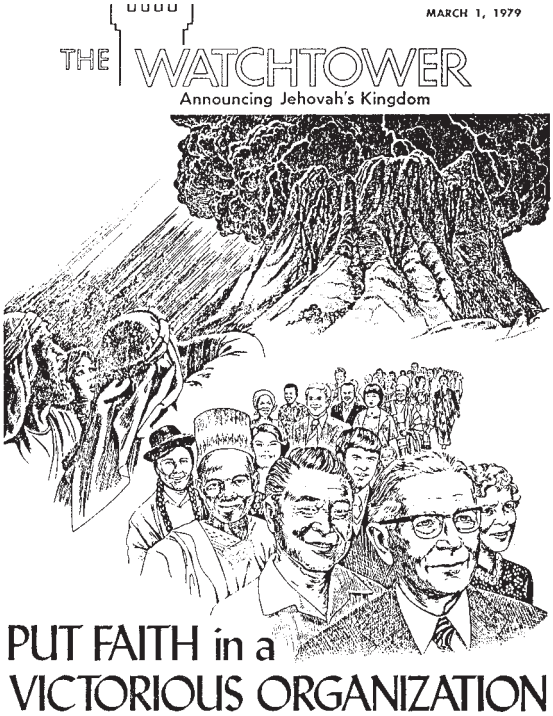
8 See *Mankind's Salvation Out of World Distress at Hand!* (1975), pages 188, 203, 204; the *Watchtower*, March 15, 1986, page 20; October 1, 1983, pages 4-7.

The Fruit of Faith

The apostle emphasizes three fruitages of God's Spirit as of greatest importance to the Christian: faith, hope and love.[9] Faith is the very basis for Christianity. On it, all else is built. The Scriptures themselves teach us to put our faith in God and in his Son. Nowhere in all the Scriptures do we find any instruction or encouragement to place our faith in men or in a human system. The apostle states:

> For the foundation, nobody can lay any other than the one which has already been laid, that is Jesus Christ. . . . there is nothing to boast about in anything human: Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the world, life and death, the present and the future, are all your servants; but you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God.[10]

By contrast the Watch Tower publications divert faith from its true object, in a sense fragment it so that it is not wholly and undividedly directed to, and based on, God and his Son. They encourage people to "Put faith in a victorious organization," as the wording on the front cover of the March 1, 1979, *Watchtower* reads.



9 1 Corinthians 13:13.

10 1 Corinthians 3:11, 21-23, *JB*.

An entire book could be filled with examples of their wholesale transferral of scriptural statements made about God and Christ to the "visible organization." Earlier chapters of this present book have documented the manner in which loyalty to God is equated with loyalty to the visible organization, submission to God's direction is equated with submission to the visible organization's direction, trust in God's Word is equated with trust in the word of the visible organization. As also documented, Scriptural statements relating to Christ are in the same way appropriated and applied to the organization. It presumes to share with Christ his role of being "the way and the truth and the life."[11] Of all the wrongs evident in the religion, the gravest, I believe, is in this diversion of faith to a human system. The Watch Tower organization is not alone among religious systems in doing this. But it certainly presents an outstanding example of assumption—and an assumption that merits the designation of arrogant—of what rightly belongs only to God and Christ.

When persons allow themselves to be led along such a course, the purity of their faith cannot but suffer. Genuine faith becomes adulterated with credulity. The greater the diversion of faith in God to faith in men, the more damaging the results. The trust placed in a human system and its apparent strength can eventually reach the point described at Jeremiah 17:5-8, where Jehovah says:

> Cursed is the man who trusts in human beings, who seeks his strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from [Jehovah]. He is like a barren bush in the desert that enjoys no change of season, but stands in a lava waste, a salt and empty earth. Blessed is the man who trusts in [Jehovah], whose hope is in [Jehovah]. He is like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream: it fears not the heat when it comes, its leaves stay green; in the year of drought it shows no distress, but still bears fruit.[12]

The more one's faith is centered on a human system, whatever that system may be, the less spiritual that one becomes. There are men who are very "religious" and yet are essentially unspiritual. They are "organization men," not men of faith. Their lives may be filled with activity that brings them organizational approval, backing, and the power that such backing affords. If the organizational backing is removed, their apparent strength disappears with it.[13] Despite their zeal for a religious organization and its growth and prosperity, their lives may nonetheless be effectively

11 John 14:6.
12 *NAB* rendering.
13 Compare Revelation 3:1, 2, 17, 18.

"barren" of those things which bring God's approval and His strength—barren as to the fruitage of His Spirit in *spontaneous, inwardly motivated, faith-impelled* acts of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness and self-control.[14]

The same year that I left the Dominican Republic to become part of the international headquarters staff, President Knorr assigned me as one of four instructors to conduct special classes of a "Kingdom Ministry" course which the traveling overseers (circuit and district) of the U.S. would attend.[15] The classes were two weeks in length and the men came in successive groups of one hundred per group. I was surprised how well one could get to know a hundred men in two weeks of class discussion. And I was equally disturbed to realize that out of any group I never found more than two or three men who gave evidence of any real depth of understanding, of insight, or, more seriously, of spirituality. The other 97 or 98 were essentially "company men," whose "service talks" manifested some oratorical ability but in content had incredibly little of spiritual nourishment, often being scarcely more than "pep talks," men who were generally effective at "placing" literature at the doors, and who in knowledge were above average only in their being very up-to-date on Society policy and regulations. At the time I was myself still a firm believer, convinced that I was part of God's one approved people on earth. Yet I remember saying to myself, "Is this really the best that we can give our brothers to help them?"

The *spirit* radiated—in speech, attitude and action—by those who put faith in a human system is not the heavenly spirit from God; it reflects a different, earthly source.[16] They may be quick to punish any deviation from organizational norms and dogma. But if they see serious wrongs committed by their religious organization itself, or recognize crucial fallacies in its teachings, they find neither the inner strength nor the courage to speak out and defend what is right, to stand up for truth or against injustice. Instead of producing persons of integrity, their implicit trust and near total subservience to an organizational system—and a fear of losing its approval—converts them into emasculated men. Had all of Jehovah's people of pre-Christian times been like this, there would have been no prophets from whose lives and words we might draw strength and assurance when facing tests of our faith in God rather than in human sources.[17] Nor would there have been Christian

14 Galatians 5:22, 23, *JB*.
15 The other instructors assigned were Edward Dunlap, Ulysses Glass and Fred Rusk.
16 James 3:17, 18.
17 Compare Isaiah 58:1; Hebrews 11:36-38; 12:1-3.

apostles who—accused of disrupting the peace of the religious community and undermining the authority of its leadership—would stand before the religious governing body of their people and say, "We cannot stop speaking about the things we have seen and heard . . . we must obey God rather than men."[18] In later times, there would have been no historical accounts of men like Wycliffe, Tyndale, Servetus, Hus, Waldo, and others, who placed conscience above conformity to a religious authority and who paved the way, in greater or smaller measure, to certain freedoms we today enjoy.

None of this is said in a spirit of either judgmentalism or scorn. Personal experience brought home to me the crippling effect that faith in a human organization produces, the weakening effect subservience to human authority has, the ease with which concern to not get out of favor with that authority can subtly infiltrate one's thinking. To free myself from those effects did not come easily. I am satisfied that natural courage does not provide the strength one needs. Persons have faced great peril at the hands of outside opposers in order to be loyal to their religious organization, have even risked their lives in enemy surroundings on behalf of other fellow members of the religion.[19] But that courage of itself gives no guaranteed protection against moral cowardice *within* that religious organization. Ultimately, how much meaning or merit is there to it if a man takes an uncompromising stand on a certain issue, perhaps spends time in a concentration camp for doing so, and then when faced with a parallel issue within his religion now compromises? What genuine significance is there in a person's refusing to engage in conduct that he views as a virtual idolizing of a political state, placing faith in it and giving it near blind allegiance, refusing to make statements that he considers as implying that one's salvation is inextricably connected with that political state, if he then engages in conduct that reflects the virtual idolizing of a *religious* system, placing faith in it, and giving it near blind allegiance as believing that his salvation is unquestionably tied in with it? Not all Witnesses reach that point. But an incredibly large number do, and the message they receive persistently, and insistently, leads them in that direction.

None of us has cause to boast in his own strength or in the strength of a human system.[20] Faith in God, not faith in the national

18 Acts 4:5, 12, 18-20; 5:27-29.
19 Compare 1 Corinthians 13:3.
20 1 Corinthians 1:26, 27, 29.

organization of Israel or in any human leadership, is what distinguished exemplary men of Biblical times, whose "weakness was turned to strength."[21] I think it is safe to say that the great majority of Watch Tower affiliates know how to "flow along with the crowd," but would find it difficult to function spiritually apart from a human system. Apart from it they would feel adrift, disoriented, with no real goal in life or the strength to strive for it. If their faith were unadulterated, centered wholly in God rather than largely in men, that would not be the case.

The Fruitage of Hope

The Christian hope undergoes similar adulteration and substitution. Focus is in an opposite direction to that stated by the apostle, who wrote:

> So if you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.[22]

In the first century, it was because of their concern for fulfillment of earthly desires—including liberation from oppression by worldly powers and the restoration and enjoyment of many physical blessings—that many found God's Son a disappointment as to fulfilling their Messianic hopes.[23] They failed to appreciate the far more wonderful liberation and blessing he actually accomplished. Their false hopes blinded them to the true hope and caused them to acquiesce in the death of God's Son.

As discussed in the previous chapter, one of the great attractions for people to associate with the Watch Tower organization is precisely its emphasis on fulfillment of physical, earthly desires. Those hopes and expectations are simultaneously excited by the assurance that the anticipated fulfillment is "soon to be realized," "very close," "at the doors," "right at hand," assurances that are based on human interpretations and which are repeated over and over again. When foretelling the coming of false Messiahs, Christ spoke also of men who would come, saying, "The time is very near now," and of such he counseled, "Never follow men like that."[24]

The true Christian hope is not based on mere desire or wishful thinking, but on reality. That genuine hope is faith-strengthening,

21 Hebrews 11:32-34, *NEB*.
22 Colossians 3:1, 2; see also Philippians 3:19.
23 Compare Luke 24:17-21; John 6:11, 14, 15, 25-27; Acts 1:6.
24 Luke 21:8, *PME*.

contributes to endurance, for it is solidly-based and unwavering, an "anchor to the soul."[25] Because of this, it does not disappoint or defraud, is always reliable and inspires confidence.[26] By contrast, the hopes excited by the Watch Tower, often tied in with certain dates, have again and again led to disappointment and, for many, to disillusionment. The expectations aroused proved to have had no more substance than a mirage, no more stability than a will-o'-the-wisp, no more constancy than the shimmering, undulating light produced by swamp gas. Young people have confidently believed that they would "never grow old in this system of things" and have predicated all their plans and steps on that belief. But they *have* grown old and have often faced difficult, even depressing, problems because of the decisions they made in earlier years, decisions largely controlled by a falsely based hope. Yet the organization, wedded as it is to its 1914 date,has claimed to know for an absolute certainty that "The time is very near now," that people in the particular time frame indicated could confidently believe it is possible to escape from the very experience of dying. There is nothing upbuilding about such illusionary hopes. To the contrary they are destructive of true hope, weakening to genuine faith.

In an unusually candid memorandum sent to the headquarters writing department in 1978, one branch office describes the effect of the organization's chronological speculations and the kind of motivation this produces, saying:

> Then there is the question of Bible chronology and motives. Many brothers started to preach positively that the new order would come in 1975 or shortly thereafter. This aroused the interest of some people who sought further information about the new order, and liked what they heard. They also became convinced on basic doctrines. So they got baptized and shared in worship with the congregation. Many were evidently motivated by their vision of the new order and the nearness of it. It was largely a materialistic motivation. When 1975 came and passed without bringing in the new order, such ones, not having a strong enough spiritual motivation, saw it best to return to running with the world in the quest of material things in the hope of enjoying a better order in the present system of things.
>
> Sadly, many who were much longer in the truth have been affected in a similar way. Since 1975 [or, in about three years time] about 30,000 have either drifted away from the truth or have become irregular in the service in this country.[27]

25 1 Thessalonians 1:3; Hebrews 6:18-20; 11:1, 2.
26 Romans 5:5.
27 Memorandum from the Watch Tower's Nigeria branch office, dated October 12, 1978, page 10.

As the *Watchtower* itself has admitted, the disappointment produced "has in some cases led to spiritual disaster."[28] The branch memorandum quoted, while showing that the effect on many was to give increased support to congregational activities, relates that "many started pioneering with that date in view, cut short their studies, restricted regular employment or refused opportunities for earning more money, neglected their health," and that with that year's passing "felt disappointed and disillusioned." I have seen people very greatly harmed by the false urgency surrounding the 1975 predictions, with some undergoing extreme emotional stress, families facing enduring economic strain for years, men who had given up good jobs having bouts with alcoholism due to the difficulty in finding new employment, elderly persons who faced a bleak future due to using insurance or similar funds prematurely, persons whose physical health was seriously damaged due to putting off surgery or other treatment. If the sacrifice had been for truth, for God, for a noble purpose, then it would be worth it. But it was due to a mental concoction originating with one person and then promulgated by an organization and it ended in nothing, proved a complete fiction. They may try to shrug it off, but the responsibility for all this rests with those who gave birth to the false hopes, who stirred up and excited illusionary expectations.

Both Christ and the apostle Paul urged for calmness and against letting earthly events and predictions become a source of alarming excitement.[29] The Watch Tower publications do the opposite, utilizing whatever world events may be current to foment agitated presentiment, a sense of something cataclysmic about to occur. They are openly committed to maintaining an unremitting sense of urgency among all members. This is used to fill the roles of both the proverbial "carrot and the stick." On the one hand it entices with the prospect of "surviving Armageddon into a new world and never dying," on the other it serves as a prod toward intensified activity in carrying out the organization's program and working toward its goals.

It is an urgency based on significance attached to world events, the implications being those the organization itself attributes to the events. Within this century, as in all previous centuries, we have seen numerous alternating periods of notable violence and of

28 The *Watchtower*, April 15, 1990, page 27

29 Matthew 24:6; 2 Thessalonians 2:1, 2. The Greek word rendered "terrified" at Matthew 24:6 in the *New World Translation* is the same word rendered "excited" at 2 Thessalonians 2:2.

relative peace. The Watch Tower organization has found the formula to use either circumstance in creating a sense of imminent disaster. Whenever a period of increased violence and unrest appears, this is pointed to as proof that the predictions made are right and that "The time is very near!" When those conditions subside and later quite opposite conditions favorable for greater peace develop, this is nonetheless utilized as evidence that "sudden destruction" is near, based on Paul's word about men saying "peace and safety" at 1 Thessalonians 5:3. The Watch Tower publications have made statements like these:

> This prophecy makes it clear that, just prior to the end of this system of things, "peace and security" will be declared in some exceptional way, whether by the United Nations or independently by political and religious leaders.[30]
>
> Now, in the waning months of President Reagan's term and in the thawing atmosphere of Secretary Gorbachev's *glasnost* (openness) policy, there appears to be serious talk about defusing the nuclear arms situation. Whether this is a prelude to bring about a supposed peace and security for the world in general, we cannot foresee. But in accordance with Bible prophecy, that is what Christians are looking for.[31]
>
> [It] will come as an *unmistakable signal* that world destruction is imminent. [32]

Yet the context of the apostle's words are against this very viewpoint, for he states:

> About dates and times, my friends, we need not write to you, for you know perfectly well that the Day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night. While they are talking of peace and security, all at once calamity is upon them.[33]

Since that "Day of the Lord" comes like a thief, clearly the apostle is not saying that people's talking of peace and security is some sort of signal or alarm in the form of a notable pronouncement. Thieves do not supply "unmistakable signals" or alarms to herald their "imminent" arrival. It is evident that Paul's words correspond to the words spoken earlier by Christ—that His coming will find people in an apparent state of normalcy, with life going on as usual, people eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, building, and planting, *with nothing to excite premonitions or give advance indications that judgment is suddenly to begin.*[34]

30 The *Watchtower*, May 15, 1984, page 6.
31 *Awake!*, April 8, 1988, page 14.
32 *True Peace and Security—How Can You Find It?* (1986), page 85.
331 Thessalonians 5:1-3, *NEB*.
34 Compare Matthew 24:26-39, 42-44; Luke 17:26-30; 21:34-36.

The periodic pronouncements of "peace and security" the nations have been making again and again throughout history prove insubstantial and short-lived, and so does any premonition based on them.

As far back as 1915, the first Watch Tower president, C. T. Russell, expressed the view in a convention that the prophesied time of proclaimed peace had begun with the first Peace Conference at the Hague (1899).[35] World War I demolished the effects of the Hague conference. Russell died in 1916 in the midst of that war.

In 1917, his successor, J. F. Rutherford, now said that following the war there would be a "short period of peace" in fulfillment of the words of 1 Thessalonians 5:3, with the "end" to come soon thereafter.[36] The "sudden destruction" delayed, however, and in the mid-1930s Rutherford wrote that "now" the time had come for the foretold peace pronouncement (according to him, to be made from the Roman Catholic Hierarchy), preceded by global silencing of the work of Jehovah's Witnesses.[37] Instead World War II began. In 1940, Rutherford wrote that the war would be interrupted by a brief peace period, immediately followed by Armageddon.[38]

After Rutherford's death, in 1942 the booklet *Peace—Can It Last?* (written by Fred Franz, but delivered as a convention keynote speech by N. H. Knorr), continued to affirm (on page 26) that the peace period following World War II "will be very short-lived," quickly followed by Armageddon. Sixty years later, we were still living in that peace period, *one that was longer than any previous period of peace between the major powers in history*.[39]

In the 1970s, with focus on the year 1975, Watch Tower publications spoke of "strange events taking place in our time," and that the "peace and security" prophecy "seems to be rapidly nearing its fulfillment."[40] 1986 was declared internationally a "Year of Peace" and this allowed for stirring up more excited expectations. The Watch Tower brought out its book *True Peace and Security—How Can You Find It?* with its description, already quoted, of a coming "peace and security" proclamation as an "*unmistakable signal* that world destruction is imminent." In 1990, with the "cold war" drawing to its close, the book *Mankind's Search For God* (page 371) referred again to 1 Thessalonians 5:3, saying:

35 See *What Pastor Russell Said* (by L. W. Jones, a close associate of Russell), page 529. In this, as in following points, I am indebted to research done by Carl Olof Jonsson.
36 See the *Watch Tower*, January 1, 1917, pages 4, 5; December 1, 1917, page 358.
37 See the booklet *Choosing—Riches or Ruin?* (1936), pages 31, 32; the book *Enemies* (1937), pages 292, 293.
38 The *Watchtower*, August 15, 1940, page 246; September 1, 1940, pages 259-266.
39 See *International Security*, Vol. 13 (1988), page 80; *International Studies Quarterly 30*, December 1986, page 269.)
40 See *Awake!* October 8, 1972, page 4, 9; *God's Kingdom of a Thousand Years Has Approached!* (1973), page 364.

> Already another outstanding Bible prophecy is approaching fulfillment before our eyes. . . .
>
> It would appear that the nations that were formerly belligerent and suspicious of one another are now moving cautiously toward a situation in which they will be able to declare world peace and security.

One would think that—after seven decades of stirring up excitement by statements whose worth proved more short-lived than the peace movements on which they were based—an organization would feel moved to humility. Instead the *Watchtower* says:

> . . . the Watch Tower Society will continue issuing in its publications timely warnings to the reading public, so that you will not be caught off guard by the coming pretentious proclamation "Peace and security," as devised by the nations of this old system of things.[41]

This is said in the face of the undeniable evidence that all the "timely warnings" of the past had proved ill-timed, ill-conceived, and ultimately meaningless. The language employed is consistently a mixture of confident-sounding declarations joined with deliberate indefiniteness and vagueness. The September 8, 1991 *Awake!* for example contains this paragraph:

> Jehovah's Witnesses firmly believe that the United Nations is going to play a major role in world events in the very near future. No doubt these developments will be very exciting. And the results will have a far-reaching impact on your life. . . . The Bible clearly paints a picture showing that the United Nations will shortly be given power and authority. The UN will then do some very astonishing things that may well amaze you. And you will be thrilled to learn that there is a better way near at hand that will surely bring eternal peace and security!

The powerful rhetoric—"the very near future," "very exciting," "astonishing things," "may well amaze you"—serve only to dazzle the reader and hinder him from realizing that nothing solid has really been said. If he turns to the scripture texts on which these claims are supposedly based (Revelation 17:7-14), he will find only a description of a symbolic wild beast with seven heads (stated as representing seven kings), and ten horns (representing ten other kings), and of an eighth king 'belonging to the seven.' The "picture"—which he is told "the Bible *clearly* paints"—turns out to depend entirely on the Watch Tower's particular interpretation of

41 The *Watchtower*, September 1, 1987, page 23.

these symbols. Compare the kind of language used in that 1991 magazine with the following:

> . . . we can expect the immediate future to be filled with thrilling events for those who rest their faith in God and his promises. It means that within relatively few years we will witness the fulfillment of the remaining prophecies that have to do with the "time of the end."
>
> The immediate future is certain to be filled with climactic events, for this old system is nearing its complete end. Within a few years at most the final parts of Bible prophecy relative to these "last days" will undergo fulfillment, resulting in the liberation of surviving mankind into Christ's glorious 1,000-year reign. What difficult days, but, at the same time, what grand days are just ahead!

The same exciting language about "the immediate future" appears as in the 1991 publication previously quoted. But these last two quotations and their predictions were based entirely on now discarded claims relative to the year *1975*, and they appeared in the October 8, 1966 *Awake!* and the May 1, 1968 *Watchtower*. The "few years ***at most***," which were to see fulfilled "the final parts of Bible prophecy relative to these 'last days,'" have already extended to more than a quarter of a century.

All the excited sense of urgency these speculative tactics produce differs greatly from an urgency based on the undeniable uncertainty of life itself and our being, due to the comparative brevity of our lives, like "a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes."[42] A sober realization of these facts can give us a proper, healthful sense of urgency, one founded on reality. In the same way, the very *unpredictableness* of the coming of God's day of judgment can impel us to be always "awake" and "sober," so that, whenever that day breaks, it will find us ready.[43] Whether we personally live to see that occur or die beforehand, our hope will be unaffected, its realization assured.

It would be wrong to think that Jehovah's Witnesses are not taught to hope in the power of the resurrection from death through Christ. They are and they do. But, for the vast majority, those not of the "anointed class," that hope is overlaid with the hope that as Witnesses they may not need to experience that Scripturally taught hope, that they may escape the need to benefit from it. This is an effort to shut out reality from one's mind, for it can be said that

42 James 4:13-15.
43 Matthew 24:42, 44; Luke 21:34, 36; 1 Thessalonians 5:6-8.

'death is a fact of life.' The Scriptures deal with that hard fact; they do not entice us with some other more palatable alternative.

Those of the "non-anointed class" are told that if they manage to live *until*—and through—the "great tribulation" their marriages will continue in effect. If they die faithful *before* the "great tribulation" they will be resurrected to life on earth but then must live forever in a celibate state.

The extremes to which these man-created hopes can affect thinking are remarkable. A friend in the writing staff at the international headquarters attended the same "congregational book study" that Maxwell Friend attended. Maxwell was one of the senior members at the headquarters, had served for many years as an instructor for Gilead School.[44] In the 1970s, after one book study night, my friend related to me that Maxwell had told the study group, "Well, my prayers have been answered." When asked what he meant he replied that he had been praying that all his non-Witness relatives would die before the "great tribulation" began. In that way they would qualify for a resurrection, whereas if they were alive when the "great tribulation" hit, they would be destroyed eternally with no hope of a resurrection. He informed the group that he had just learned that his last living non-Witness relative had died—thus his prayers were answered.

It seems incredible that anyone could believe that the extension or withdrawal of divine mercy, with all the serious consequences implied therefrom, could be governed thus by a timetable—believing that a person's dying one day, or even one hour, before the "great tribulation's" beginning would give hope of his being resurrected, but his dying one day or one hour *after* would not. Surely the individual would be essentially the same person at either time. This, and all the other preoccupations with time and time periods and signs and signals, does nothing to stir healthful appreciation of the Biblical hope.

Concern for Truth

> *By all means use your judgment, and hold on to whatever is good.* —1 Thessalonians 5:21, *Phillips Modern English.*

Faith and hope are inseparably linked to truth. Without it they become mere credulity and illusion. The adulterating of the faith and

44 He had been a Shakespearean actor in his pre-Witness days in his native Switzerland and his voice was used in many of the Watch Tower convention drama tapes.

hope taught in Scripture results in a consequent weakening of appreciation for the importance of truth within the "spiritual paradise."

It should be readily admitted that there are fine statements of Christian conduct to be found within the literature of the Watch Tower organization, including articles praising and encouraging compassion, mercy, modesty, humble admission of mistakes, and similar heart qualities. It is simply that what is *said* so frequently is not what is *done*. (Matthew 23:3) To use the words of former Catholic theologian Davis, in place of "concern for truth and concern for people," there is "concern for authority at the expense of truth" and this clearly has produced "an impersonal and unfree system." Not that concern for truth and concern for people are completely absent. It is rather that they are so severely subordinated to supposed organizational interests that they become "expendable."

I know personally many very intelligent, perceptive persons, men and women, among Jehovah's Witnesses. I know that many of them, including certain members of the Governing Body, have recognized quite a few of the serious errors in the organization's teachings and in their application. Yet these persons have continued to uphold the organization as God's chosen instrument on earth. I believe that inevitably their intelligence—at least the exercise of it—suffers as a result, is blunted, stifled, and continually diverted into efforts at rationalizing away wrong. Some of them are capable writers. But they write always with the consciousness that what they write must conform to the organizational creed, the particular spirit dominating at the time. They may write articles which are essentially healthful in content. Yet, as part of the whole, and coming from the organizational source, these serve the ultimate purpose of enhancing the organization's stature in the minds of readers and promoting the submission to its authority which it seeks, thereby binding persons to a system. Among the men, most of them will accept assignments to give talks at assemblies even if these contain statements and arguments that they themselves believe to be wrong. Their personal integrity suffers. They are acting a part, not being themselves, not being true to themselves.

Studies made of mass behavior and mind control, as during the Nazi regime, show that among the most powerful factors have been the altering and control of people's behavior, group conformity, and a virtual unquestioning obedience to authority, generally accompanied by control of information received. People naturally have a sense of personal identity through their thoughts, their feelings,

and their actions or behavior. It has been found that if one of these elements is changed, the other two tend to change along with it.

Thus, if a change can be effected in a person's behavior pattern, the person's thoughts and feelings will also generally change—for otherwise he feels an intolerable sense of discrepancy and conflict (or dissonance) within himself. When not only is there a channeling of his time into a restricted and constant program of specific activities, but also his entire behavioral pattern—his pattern of conduct, speech and dealings with others—is affected and altered, the person will feel an inner compulsion to adjust his thinking and his feelings or emotions to accommodate this change, in a sense, to validate the new behavioral pattern. His view of himself, his set of values, may all be "adjusted" to conform to the changed behavioral pattern. If that pattern is an imposed one, one submitted to only because of a supposed superior authority, it may not only rob him of his freedom of action. It may also rob him of his freedom of thought and freedom of feeling.

When a person enters a highly scheduled program, such as, but not limited to, that of the Watch Tower organization, he is made to feel that his very faithfulness to God is indicated by conformity to that program. It is not only the stress on a program of meetings and field service that exerts force. His behavior—in speech, actions and attitude—must all conform to a pattern. Witnesses in time become hypersensitive to any expression or remark that sounds even slightly deviant to the organizational norm. The person's behavior toward former friends and neighbors similarly is altered, since he is now expected to view them all as "worldlings," and deal with them accordingly. He becomes subject to a whole host of regulations and policies involving his employment, his relationships with all the people with whom he has daily contact, even relatives, who are not Witnesses, his recreation, what he reads, and other facets of life. With such a drastic alteration to his previous conduct and behavior, there is the tendency to rationalize all else to make it harmonize with and justify the conformity called for. Only in this way can a relative peace of mind be obtained—though at a price.[45]

This control of behavioral patterns is strong toward all Witnesses, even though most live in their own homes, as family members, and engage in secular work. How much more does it exert

45 A letter I received from a former Witness in Nigeria quite incisively expresses this. He said he was writing to convey his appreciation for gaining "greater insight into the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses—and organizations I mortgaged my conscience to from my childhood to my adulthood."

power toward those who are part of "institutional families"—part of the headquarters staff with its thousands of members, or of branch office staffs—all living together in multiple-dwelling buildings, eating together in large dining rooms, spending the majority of their waking and working hours surrounded by persons who are all conforming to the prescribed behavioral pattern? The subconscious inner compulsion to adjust one's thinking, outlook, sense of values, standards, to fit the pattern is especially great for them. The "dissonance" they would otherwise experience would be intolerable. I feel that some of those I know personally are far more captive of their circumstances than they realize.

This tendency to make thoughts and feelings conform to a behavioral pattern seems to be at least one explanation why, when clear errors in organizational teachings or policies are pointed out to them, most Witnesses will either refuse to acknowledge them or deny their importance.

When describing the process commonly used in mind control, one source states:

> Another key aspect of thought control involves training members to block out any information which is critical of the group. A person's typical defense mechanisms are twisted so they defend the person's new [religious] identity against his old former identity. The first line of defense includes denial ("What you say isn't happening at all"), rationalization ("This is happening for a good reason"), justification ("This is happening because it ought to be"), and wishful thinking ("I'd like it [the belief] to be true so maybe it really is").
>
> . . . If information transmitted . . . is perceived as an attack on either the leader, the doctrine or the group, a hostile wall goes up. Members are trained to disbelieve any criticism. . . . .
>
> Loyalty and devotion are the most highly respected emotions of all. . . . People are not allowed to talk to each other about anything critical of the leader, doctrine, or organization. Members must spy on one another and report improper activities or comments to leaders. Most importantly, people are told to avoid contact with ex-members or critics.[46]

The source quoted does not treat specifically of Jehovah's Witnesses, does not in fact even mention them. But the description fits them remarkably. Truth, in the Biblical sense, is not merely intellectual or academic. It goes beyond simple concern for the factualness or

46 *Combating Cult Mind Control*, pages 61-65.

fallaciousness of ideas and doctrines. It embraces not merely one's thinking, but one's actions, one's dealings with others, the influence one exercises on others. Concern for truth involves *honesty* in all these aspects. If we are dishonest with ourselves, refusing to face the hard facts of reality, we can hardly avoid becoming dishonest with others. I believe that is why those doing writing for the organization can allow themselves to present information that is not only not factual, but which, in many cases, is in a sense dishonest.

It is no real proof of love of truth, then, simply to use it as an instrument to expose the fallacies in the belief systems of others. The real test of our love of truth is when it exposes fallacies in our own belief system, and we not only accept it but are grateful to be freed from the error.

The Fruitage of Love

While faith is the figurative soil in which all the fruits of God's Spirit are rooted, the superlative fruit among these is love, for it gives worth and meaning to all the others. As the apostle expressed it:

> If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.[47]

Obviously, love of God comes first, with love of neighbor next. And yet, as the apostle John makes clear, we cannot have one without the other. The absence of one is the denial of the other.[48]

I believe that, even as with faith and hope, for Jehovah's Witnesses the meaning of love for God has been blurred, distorted. We can never lose from sight that, in our service to God, *what* we do is never as important as *why* we do it, the *motivation* with which we do it, the *spirit* in which we do it. These are the factors that give meaning to our works and invest them with the ability to show that we have, not a dead faith, but a living faith.[49] The highly structured programs of activity, the emphasis on numerical reports and figures that are so prominent in the Watch Tower system tend to

47 1 Corinthians 13:1-3, *NRSV*.
48 1 John 2:9-11; 3:11-24; 4:7-12, 16-21.
49 James 2:12, 24-26. Rahab's course, cited by James, clearly illustrates a completely spontaneous action, not some prescribed act done on order from an earthly authority.

blur this truth, cause its importance to fade. "Regularity" in performing what the program calls for becomes the criterion, and people become very conscious of the need to be a "regular publisher," "regular in meeting attendance." Previously, many "quotas" were published as to numbers of magazines placed, return visits made, hours spent in the field. Though no longer openly stated, invisible quotas remain and those not meeting them, particularly elders and ministerial servants, soon realize this. Focus is on the externals, on outward conformity, regularity, rather than on heart motivation. The mere doing of the prescribed programs produces a sense of having performed faithful service to God—and usually assures organizational approval.

Thus the branch memorandum earlier mentioned makes this observation:

> Sadly, many have lost their spiritual appetite. Perhaps quite a number of the new ones never did develop a real appetite for the food necessary for our spiritual existence. This observation applies as much to the elders as to the brothers in general. One cannot help wondering whether a considerable fraction of the whole association of our brothers have come to regard our religion as just a matter of routine, just going through the motions. (Isa. 29:13) [50]

Rather than just a "considerable fraction," the evidence is that this "routine" service attitude is true of the larger number of Witnesses. That same outlook was evident among many in Israel. Their *regular* presentation of multitudes of sacrifices, offerings, incense, prayers, their *regular* fastings, celebration of sabbaths and festal seasons—all done in conformity to the law code—presumably should have assured Jehovah's blessing. Of them Jehovah said:

> They ask counsel of me day by day and say they delight in knowing my ways . . . they ask me for righteous laws and say they delight in approaching God.

Yet, despite all that they were doing, Jehovah said he found "no delight" in their offerings and service, declared them "valueless," even "detestable." Why? Because, while zealous in prescribed works, they were showing insensitivity to the needs of others. Of their fasting and self-mortification, he goes on to say:

> You serve your own interest only on your fast-day and make all your men work the harder, since your fasting leads only to

50 Memorandum from the Nigerian branch office, page 8.

> wrangling and strife and dealing vicious blows with the fist, on such a day you are keeping no fast that will carry your cry to heaven. . . .
>
> Is not this what I require of you as a fast: to loose the fetters of injustice, to untie the knots of the yoke, to snap every yoke and set free those who have been crushed?
>
> Is it not sharing your food with the hungry, taking the homeless poor into your house, clothing the naked when you meet them and never evading a duty to your kinsfolk?
>
> Then shall your light break forth like the dawn and soon you will grow healthy like a wound newly healed . . .
>
> Then, if you call, the LORD [Jehovah/Yahweh] will answer; if you cry to him, he will say, "Here I am." If you cease to pervert justice, to point the accusing finger and lay false charges, if you feed the hungry from your own plenty and satisfy the needs of the wretched, then your light will rise like dawn out of darkness and your dusk will be like noonday; the LORD [Jehovah/Yahweh] will be your guide continually and will satisfy your needs in the shimmering heat; he will give you strength of limb; you will be like a well-watered garden, like a spring whose waters never fail.[51]

The writers of the Christian Scriptures show that God has not changed in his outlook. His Son gave a similar message in his day, and his disciples did likewise.[52] Physical bondage is largely a thing of the past. But spiritual, mental and emotional bondage remain, and religious organizations are often the cause. Through his prophet, Jehovah condemned the dealing of vicious blows. The apostle Paul spoke of those in his day who, professing to be zealous disciples, even apostles, were exalting themselves, enslaving, ordering about and, literally or figuratively, physically or verbally, "slapping" fellow believers.[53] We have seen how religious authority expresses the same spirit today. Through Isaiah, Jehovah spoke of the need to untie and snap every yoke, setting free those burdened and weighed down. Christ described regulations and prohibitions arbitrarily imposed by religious authorities as heavy burdens, and his disciples recognized that even the Law had been a yoke difficult to bear.[54] Legalism and insistent pressures to perform specified activities and to observe imposed prohibitions, with failure to conform creating the heaviness of guilt, continue to this day. Concern for authority similarly leads to organizational

51 Isaiah 58:2-11, *NEB*; compare Isaiah 1:11-17.
52 Matthew 6:1, 16; 15:8, 9; 23:23; James 1:26, 27; 2:14-16; 1 John 3:17, 18.
53 2 Corinthians 11:5, 9, 12-14, 20.
54 Matthew 23:1-3; Acts 15:10, 11; Galatians 5:1.

"perversions of justice," "pointing the accusing finger," and "laying of false charges" that differ only in form to those spoken of by the prophet.

Love of Neighbor

The substituting of organizational loyalty in place of concern for truth inevitably produces a degree of insensitivity to people and their needs. There are as many normally loving persons among Jehovah's Witnesses as among any other religion. It is not that they now cease to be loving persons. Rather, it is that their *expression* of that love is markedly restricted, reduced in occasion, degree and scope. They do not feel free—sometimes not even impelled—to express that love as they otherwise might.

When Jesus gave the parable illustrating genuine love of neighbor, he chose, not the figure of a fellow Israelite or Judean, but that of a Samaritan, a man "of *another nation*," whose religion *differed* from that of the Jews in general, whose religion many of them *despised*, a man toward whom they felt superior in their righteousness.[55]

He said that sonship with God—who "makes his sun rise on wicked people and good and makes it rain upon righteous people and unrighteous"—is not demonstrated simply by love and warmth toward one's brothers while being cool and distant in one's dealings with all others. It called for love toward those whom it is most difficult to love, even those who appear as enemies, and for the expression of a friendly attitude toward not just one's brothers but those not one's brothers, toward "outsiders."[56] Jesus practiced what he taught, was willing to share meals and be a guest at homes where a Pharisee would never have set foot, causing him to be vilified and denounced as "a man gluttonous and given to drinking wine, a friend of tax collectors and sinners."[57]

By contrast, the Watch Tower organization fosters the spirit of a closed society, whose only interest toward persons in the community outside is to seek to convert them to membership in that society. It essentially instills the feeling that only in case of some dire emergency—some natural disaster, accident, or other life-threatening situation—is there particular reason for a Witness

55 Luke 10:29-37; 17:15-18, John 4:9; 8:48.
56 Matthew 5:43-48. The word rendered "greet" may carry the thought of "to act in a friendly manner." See *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Vol. 1, page 115.
57 Matthew 11:19; John 4:9, 40.

otherwise to show interest in the needs of those outside his brotherhood.[58] Unquestionably, there are Witnesses who do not manifest this restricted, ungenerous outlook, who do not parcel out their warmth and friendship in such a way, who show a friendly, caring spirit toward neighbors and fellow members of the community. I believe, however, that most persons who have Witnesses as neighbors view them as essentially orderly, law-abiding people, but also find them generally cool and distant. Most Witnesses feel that for them to go to a meal in the home of "worldly" neighbors or others would lead to organizational criticism—criticism in very much the same terms as those religious authority employed against Jesus.

One of the first things that seriously disturbed me was being made aware of the lack of neighbor love even *within* the Witness organization, and this on the part of those at the top level thereof. The manner in which, after only brief discussions, decisions could be made that would seriously affect the lives of thousands of persons was more than anything else what upset me. I came to realize that the concept of the exalted importance of "organization" allowed for men to develop an attitude that I can only describe as cynical toward the rest of the brotherhood, and still not feel a sense of guilt. Statements made in Governing Body sessions time and again conveyed the viewpoint that the "rank and file" among the Witnesses needed to be strictly controlled—through rulings and policies—to avoid widespread wrongdoing. The genuineness of the heart motivation of Witnesses generally was in this way placed in question. The spirit among many Governing Body members seemed to be one of "trust only ourselves," not the rest of the claimed brotherhood.[59] The sense of responsibility toward others is seriously diminished. There is no sense of guilt in presenting a slanted picture of the organization's past history, by the method of withholding facts that are unfavorable and which facts are not generally accessible to the majority of Witnesses. When predictions based on certain dates have proved in error, the attitude essentially has been: simply say nothing about it and the people (the body of Witnesses) will soon forget it. Governing Body members could even have their own personal doubts about the validity of claims regarding 1914 without feeling any need to make any cautionary statements to the Witnesses in general as to putting implicit trust in those claims.[60] In this and in many

58 And when help *is* given to outsiders in such emergencies, it is almost always published thereafter in *Watchtower* or *Awake!* articles. Contrast Jesus' words at Matthew 6:1-4.
59 See also *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 46-56, 111-171.
60 See Crisis *of Conscience*, pages 172-254..

other ways a cynical attitude is shown, one demeaning to the intelligence of the Witness community as a whole.

An example of this attitude is seen in the change regarding the distribution of literature. On February 25, 1990, the announcement was made in the United States that from March 1, 1990 onward Watch Tower literature would be distributed free—on a complete donation basis—with no specified contribution stated. In Kingdom Halls throughout the country, organizationally supplied information was read to Witnesses presenting this change in policy as one based on concern to "greatly simplify our Bible education work and separate ourselves from those who commercialize religion." It was presented as making the literature more accessible to all persons. Thus, the entire change in policy was cloaked in wrappings of charitableness and freedom from self interest.[61]

What is nowhere stated, is that, long before the announcement was made, the Watch Tower Society knew that *the right of a state to tax a religious ministry's sale of religious literature* had become an issue before the courts. This arose with regard to the imposition of a 6-percent tax by the state of California on literature distributed by the Jimmy Swaggart Ministries, Swaggart being one of the more prominent American television evangelists. The Watch Tower Society, along with the National Council of Churches of Christ, the California Society for Krishna Consciousness, and other religious groups, had filed an *amicus curiae* (friend-of-the-court) brief in this case urging the court to declare unconstitutional a state's thus taxing the sale of religious literature by a religious organization.[62] On January 17, 1991, however, the U. S. Supreme Court ruled that a state had that right. The following month, February, 1991, the Watch Tower Society issued its announcement of the change of policy to a "free literature" distribution. *That announcement contained not one word about the matter of taxation*. It conveyed to the Witness membership the idea that the organization's decision had been reached purely on the basis of other, charitable and selfless, concerns. This is clearly cynicism in a blatant form. An article in *The Atlanta Journal & Constitution* of March 3, 1990, based in part on an interview with attorney for the Watch Tower Philip Brumley stated:

61 An initial step had been taken at the U.S. district conventions 1989 toward this change, when newly released publications were offered "free" to those in attendance, though with contribution boxes placed conveniently nearby. The monthly Watch Tower publication *Our Kingdom Ministry* of May 1990 contained a supplement which quoted a letter from one family, saying: "One outstanding new feature that really touched our hearts was the way you released the new publications. My wife and I were moved to 'really open up' and give far more than we ever have at any assembly throughout the many years we have been associated." This illustrates the idea the organization wishes to develop in the membership, that the "free literature" policy change is purely motivated by a generous, charitable interest in people.

62 See, among many similar news reports, the report in the *Washington Post* of January 18, 1990.

> Several Supreme Court decisions, including a recent decision ruling that California could tax literature and tapes sold by Jimmy Swaggart's ministry, convinced Witness leaders to dispense with the suggested donation, Mr. Brumley said.

If the motivating factor was indeed to make the message contained in Watch Tower literature more easily available to people, why is it that this "free literature policy" currently is limited to the United States, Canada, Germany and Italy, all countries with a notably strong economy? Why is it not worldwide? Or, if a gradual introduction was considered advisable, why did it not see its beginning in some of the poorer countries of the world? Why would it not be first implemented in the so-called "Third World" countries where poverty is so extensive? If the new policy is to show that they are "separate . . . from those who commercialize religion," why do they continue with the old policy in all these other countries? The fact is that even the word "free" is rather hollow when compared with the actual practice. Previously Witness purchased their literature at the Kingdom Hall and, when "placing" it with the public, asked for a specified "contributions" and kept the amount received to compensate for what they had spent initially to obtain it. Now, they obtain their literature at the Hall without directly paying for it, but a "contribution box" is placed alongside the literature counter and there is an obvious sense of pressure to contribute for whatever they receive. Then, on "placing" the literature with the public they are counselled to inform the householder taking literature that a donation is acceptable for the literature, though without specifying any amount. If a donation is made, the Witness is instructed that he or she should not keep that donation (thereby covering his or her cost of the literature) but should turn it in as money donated to the Watch Tower Society. Thus, in many, possibly most cases, the organization is not only receiving what it received before but actually double what it received before. When some publication is now advertised in one of the Watch Tower journals, the advertisement may say nothing of a donation. However, if the reader writes in requesting the publication and does not send a accompanying donation, the headquarters' practice is to have a local Witness visit the individual at his home, carrying the requested publication, this method allowing for the Witness to bring up the suggestion of a donation for it.[63]

63 It may be noted that other religious organizations, such as the Worldwide Church of God, have for decades given their literature away free to the public and this without any implied expression of an interest in a donation.

Simultaneously, the organization has adopted the policy of offering meals at assembly cafeterias "free" to those attending the assemblies. This, too, had a precedent. I recall in the 1970s, while I was on the Governing Body, that the West German government imposed a heavy tax on the Watch Tower branch, stating that the cafeteria operations at assemblies were clearly profit-making operations. The equivalent of more than a million dollars was raised by the German Witnesses to pay for the tax. In the U.S. all those charged with the administration of assemblies (called district assembly overseers) have long been instructed that the cafeteria operation should produce sufficient profit to cover all assembly expenses. Witnesses may have thought that the monies they put in the many contribution boxes at the assembly sites were used to cover such expenses, but the assembly overseers were specifically told that all such contributions were to go directly to the Watch Tower Society, not to be used to cover assembly expenses.

One wonders how long it will take the organization to extend these policies to the poorer countries of the world. They may possibly find that, unlike results in the economically strong countries where the policies now apply, their material returns will be lessened when and if they do so, for not only would the public in those poorer countries be less likely to make donations for literature accepted, but many Witnesses would find themselves financially unable to bear the expense of giving literature to people without at least being able to cover the cost to themselves. As it is, the words the organizational leadership sends out in praise of their new policy continue to ring hollow, and their failure to frankly acknowledge to the membership the factors behind the change—actually disguising the reason—remains a remarkable evidence of cynicism, a manifestation of a certain contempt for their intelligence. This is hardly the neighbor love that does unto the other as one would have done to oneself.

Loving Friendship

> *A true companion is loving all the time, and is a brother that is born for when there is distress.*—Proverbs 17:17.

We remember the claim that, "Only in the spiritual paradise, among Jehovah's Witnesses, can we find the self-sacrificing love Jesus said would identify his true disciples." Anyone observing or mingling with Jehovah's Witnesses gathered at a Kingdom Hall, before and after a meeting, or at one of their large assemblies would bear testimony to a sense of camaraderie and unity and apparent

happiness among them. The question is whether this is of itself the true test of the claims made, particularly of the *depth* of these feelings.

Is that sense genuinely *unique*, distinctively different from the sense of camaraderie, unity and apparent happiness one can see in the gatherings of many other affiliations, not only among those of a particular religious affiliation but even among those united in some social cause? Since Witnesses are virtually prohibited from being present at any such gatherings other than their own, they have no other standard than themselves by which to judge. This can only call to mind these words of Paul:

> For we do not dare to class ourselves among some or compare ourselves with some who recommend themselves [write their own testimonials, *Phillips Modern English*]. Certainly they in measuring themselves by themselves and comparing themselves with themselves have no understanding.[64]

The value of a good and loyal friend is beyond measure. One would think that in a "spiritual paradise" such friendships would flourish. As in any religious community, friendships do develop among Jehovah's Witnesses, some of them close ones. I had a number of close friendships during my years of association. And a considerable portion of those persons are still my friends, for they held similar values and those values generally led eventually to their own disengagement from the Witness organization. But I also have come to realize how *conditional* most friendships within the Witness community are. This is not primarily the fault of the people, for they are, by and large, like people anywhere. It is instead the effect of the system on their attitudes and relationship.

In reality, mere *acceptance* within the community is completely conditional. As we have seen, the April 1, 1986 issue of The *Watchtower,* states (page 31):

> Approved association with Jehovah's Witnesses requires accepting the entire range of the true teachings of the Bible, including those Scriptural beliefs that are unique to Jehovah's Witnesses.

Acceptance of "the true teachings *of the Bible* does not go far enough—it must be extended by the additional qualification of those Scriptural beliefs that *are unique to Jehovah's Witnesses.*[65]

64 2 Corinthians 10:12.

65 Actually, many of the beliefs listed in the *Watchtower* material are by no means "unique." Seventh Day Adventists, the Worldwide Church of God and others also believe in the nearness of Armageddon, the millennial reign of Christ, the establishment of an earthwide paradise. These beliefs and yet others claimed as "unique" are found in the several "Bible Student" groups, such as the Dawn fellowship, the Layman's Home Missionary movement, and in religions such as the Church of God of the Abrahamic Faith. Most of these have origins dating back into the 1800s. Belief in 'Christ's being subordinate to the Father ' is by no means unique to Witnesses. The only truly "unique" beliefs among those the *Watchtower* article lists are those which would identify the "faithful and discreet slave" as associated with the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses. Even the date 1914 is given importance in some of these other religious groups and it is only the particular *application* which the Watch Tower Society now gives to that date which is "unique."

While claiming to be distinct from religions holding to a creed, one often hoary with centuries of age, the Witness organization has its own creed, even if certain of its elements may be as new as yesterday. The term "creed" itself is avoided and is simply replaced by expressions such as the "grand body of truth that Jehovah has built up among his united people over the past 100 years" or the "pattern of the 'pure language' that Jehovah has so graciously taught his people over the past century."[66] But such terminology only produces a distinction without a difference, for a "creed" claims to be just that, an officially outlined body of fundamental beliefs, to be accepted as divine truth by those adopting the creed. Any claimed difference with other religions in this respect disappears under examination. The creed may change, what was once taught may be rejected, perhaps later be reinstated, but *whatever the creed is at the time* must be completely embraced or one faces rejection as an 'approved associate.' In the "spiritual paradise," any friendship is therefore predicated upon that condition.

How solid a basis for friendship is this? As noted, many of the doctrinal beliefs have been extremely fluid, some changing with almost kaleidoscopic variety and frequency. This became sufficiently evident, even to the leadership, that they often used the expression "*present* truth."[67] Examples of doctrinal change are remarkably numerous, and can only bring to mind (and confirm the rightness of the principle set out in) Jesus' statements about the disappointing results of building on sand, which shifts and lacks stability, and about the vain emptiness of worship that is built around human regulations, as also the apostle Paul's reference to the undesirableness of being as children "at the mercy of every chance wind of teaching, and of the jockeying of men," as they "tack" this way and that in advancing their views.[68]

66 See the *Watchtower*, August 15, 1981, page 28.

67 See *Crisis of Conscience*, page 217. The expression appears as recently as 1988 in the book *Revelation—Its Grand Climax at Hand!*, page 8, which speaks of "the need to keep up-to-date with present truth," doing this despite the fact that, from its early use in Watch Tower publications, the phrase is one adopted from the *King James* or *Authorized Version* rendering of 2 Peter 1:12, a rendering that is nowhere followed by any modern translation, including the Society's own *New World Translation*. The thought is not of "present" in the sense of being *current*, a temporal sense, but in the sense of pres*ence*, of *location*, hence of truth that had already been received and was *with*, or *in*, those to whom Peter wrote. The *New English Bible*, for example, reads: "I will not hesitate to remind you of this again and again, although you know it and are well grounded in the truth that has already reached you." The Watch Tower writer, in employing this out-of-date expression, is himself failing to follow his own urging to "keep up-to-date."

68 Matthew 7:24-27; 15:9; Ephesians 4:14, *PME*; 2 Timothy 3:7; for examples of shifting teachings and policies, see *Crisis of Conscience* , pages 9, 10 and footnotes, 57-65, 172-272.

Only the fool refuses to change. The sensible person recognizes his own limitations and imperfections. True wisdom has as its inseparable companions both modesty and humility.[69] But if it is foolish to refuse to change, it is equally foolish to base one's *trust*, one's *convictions*, on that which is unstable, to *commit* oneself to a belief system which is built upon the fluctuating, shifting views of imperfect men. The lamentable factor in the history of the Witness organization is not primarily the instability of its teachings but its *insistence*, particularly from the 1920s forward, that all must accept *whatever teachings happen to be current* as though they were solid, stable truth. To accept them means being "in the Truth"; to reject any of them places one "outside the Truth." Friendship conditioned on such acceptance requires one to shift whenever the teachings shift—otherwise the conditional friendship is endangered.

The real test of any friendship is how it responds to difficulties. In an article entitled "True Friends, Why So Hard to Find?" the *Watchtower* comments:

> Some people are superficial, concerned only with the surface aspects of life. Others are not willing to make the sacrifices necessary for friendship. "Don't get involved!" is the advice one hears so often these days.
>
> . . . As one elderly woman observed: "They love, but at a distance." Even in cultures where profuse hugging and kissing are common courtesies, there may be a lack of real support when dire need strikes.

Under the subheading "Shallow Friendships," the article goes on to say:

> Many people, nevertheless, claim that they *do* have friends. But how much depth is there to such relationships? Often a person takes an interest in someone because of what that one has to *offer*, not because of what he *is*. Such friendships are therefore likely to be short-lived, for as soon as the "friend" ceases to be useful, he or she is promptly discarded.[70]

I believe that any Witness who takes time to weigh matters will realize how greatly friendship among Witnesses, ultimately and in the final analysis, is predicated on one's being in favor with the "organization" and what he has to offer in such an organizational context, not on what he is as a person or the qualities he has or the values he upholds. The person's qualities or values have merit only as they conform to and advance the organizational interests. That kind of friendship is very much like one that stems

69 James 3:13.

70 The *Watchtower* of May 15, 1985, pages 3, 4.

primarily from one's holding membership in good standing within a club, lodge, union, or similar group.

The intense stress on performance within the organizational works program strongly affects attitudes. Persons who at one time contributed much to the organization's support by their intense activity in "field service" and who, due to economic difficulties, health problems, family matters or other causes, have had to greatly reduce their activity, all too often find that interest in them wanes in proportion to this decrease in what they can now give in service. Some who engaged in "full time service" as pioneers, missionaries, traveling overseers, doing so until older age, find that there is nothing truly reciprocatory about it all—while they had something to give, the organization gladly accepted their sacrifices and whatever increase in membership it helped produce, but when they no longer had the ability to give in the form desired they were in effect "shelved," receiving a form letter acknowledging their past service and thereafter essentially forgotten. Unlike other religious systems, the organization has no realistic retirement provisions for such longtime representatives. Men, along with their wives, who spent years in circuit work, moving from place to place week after week, when no longer able to keep up with the demanding schedule are put on what is called the "infirm special pioneer list." The monthly allowance they receive could never, of itself, adequately cover the cost of living in today's world. Unless they receive help from relatives or past acquaintances they must often live a life of genuine austerity. Many are essentially objects of charity. The warmth of interest shown in them, the degree of esteem and expressions of appreciation, rarely continue on the same level. They are the same people, have the same qualities, but, to use the words of the *Watchtower*, what they "have to offer" has diminished and they are not as "useful" as in the past.[71]

Throughout the organization a notably large number of men who faithfully served as elders for years have, in the past decade or so, decided to resign their eldership. At times the reason has been that they simply feel that their wives and children deserve more of their time and attention. At other times it has been because they could not conscientiously enforce certain organizational policies or advocate certain teachings. In resigning, they may have preferred not to make known these feelings and have only said the

71 As in the case of Sue Walker, related in an earlier chapter, such Christian activity as caring for aged parents is not viewed as being as meritorious as activity in some "theocratic service" such as being a missionary or serving at "Bethel."

resignation was "for personal reasons." Yet many such have expressed that this step caused an unexpected reaction of sudden coolness on the part of the congregation, even a diminishing of friendships, in some cases a virtual rejection, the announcement of their no longer being elders causing fellow Witnesses to view them as if they should now be avoided as wrongdoers.

In a following article on how to find "true friends," the *Watchtower* cited spoke of "fair-weather friends" and said that a true friendship:

> . . . rests upon an appreciation of the true worth of the one befriended. . . . a solid friend will be unwavering and will adhere to his friendship regardless of the trialsome or difficult conditions, or the heart-searching circumstances that may develop.
>
> The loyal friend does not hold back from telling the truth out of fear of the other person's reaction. "The wounds inflicted by a lover are faithful," says the Bible. (Proverbs 27:6) . . . A true friend will love you for 'telling the truth,' even if it is corrective counsel.—Proverbs 9:8.
>
> It is also the course of wisdom to avoid being overly inquisitive, personal, or possessive. Modesty will move us to avoid being dogmatic. Surely, friendship does not give us the right to force our opinions or personal tastes on one another.[72]

All these statements express noble sentiments and truths. In their application in the magazine, however, they are all used to advance the view that true friendship can be found only within the Witness community. Within that community the criterion for showing friendship, and the loyalty characterizing a true friend, is tied firmly to organizational conformity. Many Witnesses do have qualities that would make for the finest of friends: a genuinely affectionate nature, unselfish concern for others' interests, modesty, openmindedness, respect for another's privacy and right to his or her own opinions. And they show these—to the extent that organizational policy allows. That policy obliges them to express a friendship conditioned on the other person's having organizational approval, conditioned on one's total acceptance of its teachings and policies, one's support of its program of activity. Love of God and Christ, respect for the Scriptures, love of people, high moral standards, conscientiousness—none of these will assure the continuation of expressions of love toward a person if he or she does not meet the organizational conditions just stated.

72 The *Watchtower*, May 15, 1985, pages 5, 6, 9.

There is a saying that any organization is nothing more than the lengthened shadow of the man or men who are at its head and control it. Does the Watch Tower organization itself, then, act as a true friend in the way advocated in its own comments, quoted earlier? Or does it call for a loyalty from its members that it itself does not give? Does it show itself friendly and loyal only, or primarily, to those who can give it support, time, money, effort, and submission to its views and policies—giving it that which increases its size and strength and influence? Does it show itself warm to, and speak in praise of, those who do this in large measure, giving much, but cool to those who do it in lesser measure, subtly implying that it expected more from them? Does it love those who are moved to speak out in "telling the truth" to it in a corrective manner, or does it view itself as above receiving correction from anyone but itself or God, angrily labeling those who express reproof as enemies, not only of itself but enemies of God? Does it "avoid being overly inquisitive, personal, or possessive" toward members, or does it rather assume the right to insert itself in virtually every aspect of their life, advancing its own dogmatic opinions as to how they should conduct a large portion of their personal affairs, how they should spend their time, what they should read, what employment is acceptable, what attitude they should take as to their children's education, to what extent members should interest themselves in persons outside the organization's own area of control, how far they should go in extending charity to such ones, and in a host of other ways show itself as 'overly personal and possessive'? Does it merely offer its opinions as simply opinions, or does it instead *persistently* advance these opinions, while simultaneously implying that failure to accept them demonstrates a lack of respect? Would one not find that kind of "friendship" on a personal, individual level something oppressive? Yet whereas many would not tolerate this imposition of standards from an individual, they will accept it from a system.

The individual Witness member's knowledge of the organization's standpoint cannot but color the quality of his own friendship with any fellow member; the possessive spirit expressed by the organization cannot help but severely limit the extent and strength of that relationship, creating a climate in which the unselfish, courageous, and self-sacrificing loyalty of genuine friendship is at risk.

Generally, when one who has spent much of his or her life in the Witness organization comes to the conclusion that its claims of exclusively having God's favor are not solidly based, this re-

sults in a sense of distress, a period of crisis marked by an intense struggle between the appeal for organizational loyalty and the voice of conscience. At such a time, one normally turns to close friends for help or counsel or added strength. One of the great blessings of true friendship is precisely that sense of freedom to open up on things of deep concern, knowing that, while the friend may not agree, he or she will listen and give honest consideration to one's reasons and especially one's motivation. In the "spiritual paradise," however, any frank expression of a different viewpoint, no matter how conscientious, almost automatically brings a cloud of suspicion. Winds of rumors begin blowing. The test of whether one's friends are "fair-weather friends" or not, of how loyal they will prove themselves "regardless of the trialsome or difficult conditions, or the heart-searching circumstances that may develop" (to use the *Watchtower*'s expressions) now begins. Though not always, the results are usually disillusioning. Whether the observation one makes is true or not is rarely given consideration, for the one spoken to may not even take the time or thought necessary to consider whether there is validity in it. The "lengthened shadow" of the organizational leadership looms over the friendship and almost automatically has a chilling effect.

All too often when one goes through a crisis situation that causes loss of organizational favor, the reaction is (using the words the *Watchtower* employs of false friends), "Don't get involved!" Some have said, "I don't know the details and I prefer not to know." Others, learning of adverse action by a "judicial committee," have said, "I don't know the circumstances, but the individual must have been in the wrong or the organization would not have taken the action it did." Thus the person is presumed guilty of wrong without any hearing of the evidence. I know personally of a number of long-term friendships where both parties saw the same fallacies and organizational wrongs and felt free to discuss them in private conversation. When one of the parties came under organizational scrutiny, however, the other—perhaps with a degree of embarrassment and with assurances that "My respect for you hasn't changed and you'll still be my friend"—nonetheless in effect said that circumstances made it necessary to cease communication and association. As the *Watchtower*'s quotation of the elderly woman's comment puts it, "They love, but at a distance," in contrast to the friend "sticking closer than a brother" in time of crisis.[73]

73 Proverbs 18:24.

This concern for organizational acceptance and a corresponding lack of concern for truth are by no means unique with Jehovah's Witnesses. It is also true of other religious organizations. A few years ago, while I was visiting in California, some friends took me to see Ambassador College. It is the major educational center of the Worldwide Church of God, originally founded by the now-deceased Herbert W. Armstrong, and occupies a relationship comparable to that of Gilead School with the Watch Tower Society. While in the large cafeteria style dining room I could not help but note the similarity between the people and surroundings to those found in a dining room of one of the Watch Tower institutions, such as the Brooklyn Bethel. The surroundings were pleasant, everything was scrupulously clean, the young people there, of different racial backgrounds, were all neatly dressed, many carrying brief cases, and their faces reflected a sense of dedication. The initial impression could only be that of peaceful unity, of earnestness in making known what those there understood to be God's purpose.

More recently, I read a letter published in a periodical called *Ambassador Review*. It was written by a former member of the Worldwide Church of God who had been part of the staff of Ambassador College. In 1972 he began experiencing serious doubts about the validity of the religion's claims but, as he says, he felt this was God's one true church and that God "would take care of the situation"; and, if this indeed "was the only true church, where else was there to go?" He adds that "many in [the church] said we shouldn't even open a piece of literature written by a 'dissident.'" However, he finally withdrew from this organization (in 1974), and among the conclusions he had by then reached were these:

> Before an individual becomes a member of the Worldwide Church of God, he is encouraged "to prove all things, hold fast that which is true." The ministry tells him, "Don't believe what we say—check it out." "If we teach contrary to God's Word, do not follow us." Unfortunately, the opposite process begins once one is in the Worldwide Church of God. The member is told that "Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong is closer to God and has more of his Holy Spirit than anyone else, which is the reason he is the leader of the Church" or "Since Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong is the leader of God's Church, he must be closer to God and have more of his Holy Spirit than anyone else." . . . This type of circular reasoning is taught to the members, and is applied to a lesser degree [to successive layers of officials on down the line]. By the time you get to the lowly laymember, his opinion is worthless, when compared with the hundreds of those who must be closer to God since they have higher positions, or who have higher positions since they are closer to God.

There is so much here that is familiar. The same initial process stressing personal conviction when *attracting* persons, thereafter followed by the same process of subordinating them to an authority structure *once they are inside*. For Jehovah's Witnesses, no persons are viewed as in a closer relationship to Jehovah God and Christ than those forming the Governing Body. They believe that holy Spirit operates in a special way toward these men. Those of what the *Watchtower* has referred to as "the rank and file" feel that to question the direction of this Body is to question God's direction of his people.

The former Worldwide Church of God member goes on to say:

> In this way the member is stripped of any confidence in himself or God's Spirit in him. He places Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong and the rest of the ministry in the position of defining what he must believe—in place of Jesus Christ and the Bible. The ministry carefully shows the laymembers *how* to prove the beliefs of the Worldwide Church of God from the Bible. The member thinks his belief is firmly grounded in the Bible, but for him to prove it he must rely heavily on the proof-texts and the explanations he has been given. I don't necessarily mean all these beliefs or explanations are incorrect, but the member is being groomed into a spiritually dependent person, and his primary dependency isn't on Christ or the Holy Spirit, but on Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong and the ministry of the Worldwide Church of God.
>
> . . . It doesn't take a spiritually strong person to merely accept exactly what the [church] teaches and to obey it strictly. But it does require strength of character and spirit to question, research, prove, and then abide by your convictions, regardless of what the [church] or anyone else says.[74]

The remarkable parallel between the conditions he describes in this religion and those prevailing among Jehovah's Witnesses should be obvious to any Witness—one need but substitute "Governing Body" and "the organization" in place of references to Mr. Armstrong or the church "ministry" and the description fits precisely. All religious organizations obviously endeavor to instill loyalty in their membership, encourage submission to the direction of the leadership. What attaches an added degree of reprehensibility is when there is such a sharp contrast between the reality and the extreme claims an organization makes for itself, the constant self-praise and self-commendation accompanied by an equally constant deprecation of all others and of their religious record.

The climate of fear thus found in the Watch Tower's "spiritual paradise" and its effect on freeness of speech is strikingly like that found in countries controlled by a totalitarian system, where one must be constantly on guard due to an "informer" system. In numerous cases, the person's own mate or family members or relatives have

74 From a 1976 letter by Bob Gerringer to Charles Hunting.

threatened to "go to the elders" simply because the individual conscientiously questions the Biblical support for a certain teaching, or because of quietly discontinuing attendance at organizational meetings. At times it is the carrying out of this threat by family members that leads to judicial hearings. The result is a circumstance like one long ago that caused Jehovah's prophet to give this warning:

> Do not put your faith in a companion. Do not put your trust in a confidential friend. From her who is lying in your bosom guard the openings of your mouth. For a son is despising a father; a daughter is rising up against her mother; a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his household.[75]

The friendship of David and Jonathan is often cited in Watch Tower literature as an example of the loyal unity that should be found in God's congegation.[76] Jonathan's loyalty to David, however, is in stark contrast to that generally found within the Witness organization. David was suddenly placed in a position of complete disfavor with what constituted the national organizational structure of Israel, topped by its visible, 'theocratically appointed' head, King Saul. He was viewed as an enemy by such anointed organizational head, was forced to live like a "disfellowshiped" or "excommunicated" person.[77] David even hid out for a time at Gath among the pagan Philistines, the people who ultimately caused the death of Saul, and he also placed his parents in the protective care of the king of Moab.[78] If Saul's son Jonathan had lived according to the Watch Tower concept of an overriding duty to uphold and support all organizational action and policy, he would have summarily ceased all association with David. Very much to the contrary, though knowing that the highest authority of the national organization viewed the man as an enemy, he continued to meet with David and act on his behalf, even speaking in the defense of this condemned, exiled man before the anointed, theocratically appointed, organizational authority. He did so because he believed that David was blessed of Jehovah, despite the organizational rejection he was experiencing.[79] Jonathan's loyalty was not predicated upon, nor controlled by, organizational acceptance and approval. It had a far higher basis. Though perhaps rare, there are persons among Jehovah's Witnesses

75 Micah 7:5, 6.
76 See, for example, the *Watchtower* of May 15, 1985, page 9; January 1, 1989, page 28.
77 1 Samuel 19:11, 12; 20:1; 22:1, 2.
78 1 Samuel 21:10; 22:3, 4.
79 1 Samuel 20:16.

who have courageously demonstrated that kind of friendship despite the outcome they knew might lie ahead.

Fruitage of Joy

In listing the fruits of the Spirit, the apostle places "joy" after "love."[80] As with the other aspects of the claimed "spiritual paradise," the genuineness of this fruitage presents a contrast between appearance and reality.

During the nearly sixty years of my life spent in association with Jehovah's Witnesses I had many enjoyable experiences and I retain some pleasant memories. Though I am definitely happier now, I was not "unhappy" then. Yet I know that what degree of happiness I did have was always limited and restricted by a sense of unremitting pressure. The problem was not with internal pressure, resulting from heart motivation, for that led to spontaneous acts that brought me much happiness. The problem was with external pressure that seemed to lay claim to all my time and all that I was, that squeezed out truly spontaneous acts and use of time. During the twenty years I spent as a missionary, I felt warm affection for the people where I served, many of them of humble circumstances, and I still hold such feeling. I enjoyed living among them in their lands. Looking back, I realize now that most of the happiness I had was due to people *as persons*, rather than something directly attributable to the religion itself.

We have already seen in previous chapters how responsible organizational representatives have themselves voiced the sense of pressure felt by most Witnesses, a pressure sustained by the steady flow of exhortation to greater effort through the communications received from the Brooklyn headquarters and its traveling representatives. That constant pressure, and the stress it produces, does not contribute to emotional health or true happiness. Nor does it lead to genuine spiritual growth and the joy this produces. It contributes to a routine of activity that often brings little sense of accomplishment, and which is largely sustained by the hovering sense of guilt the organizational pressure creates.

Much of the Witnesses' joy is said to be because they partake of a "rich banquet" of spiritual food. Though regularly told that they are spiritually the "best-fed people on earth," the fact is that, when they feel safe to do so, Witnesses frequently acknowledge a sense of monotony, tiring sameness, in their meetings, even their large assemblies being annual repetitions of what has been said again and again in previous assemblies. Their "service meetings"

80 Galatians 5:22.

manifest many of the markings of sales meetings, with emphasis on techniques and constant exhortations to greater activity and productivity. The assembly programs are extraordinarily predictable from year to year. All talks of any length, either given locally or at assemblies, must conform scrupulously to outlines the organization itself supplies. Listening, one in reality hears the organization, not the person speaking. Often if asked what they learned at a meeting or at an assembly program Witnesses are hard put to recall anything of substance to give as a reply. Rarely do they come away with anything that stays in their mind as something genuinely strengthening to faith or that can contribute toward an improvement in their service to God and their efforts at Christian living.

The youth among Jehovah's Witnesses particularly express their sense of weariness in these meetings, finding much that is monotonous. The ratio of children of Jehovah's Witnesses who, upon reaching the age of independence, leave the organization has always been notably high. A letter sent to the headquarters by one longtime elder and "city overseer" made these comments about both home instruction and congregational instruction of young people:

> The teaching at home has been, in most cases, superficial. Depth is lacking, relevancy is absent. Some parents have built superlative young people out of "fire resistant" material. Others raise themselves and although exposed to the truth it never had great meaning for them. Thus, they marry, get a job, start a family and disappear into the woodwork. They're present but always on the perimeter.
>
> For example, I have conducted sessions with young men in the congregation relating to improvement of speaking and reading. It also addresses itself to teaching and learning the Bible. It's not organized; it's informal. But all the participants beg for more such sessions. They love to come and soon others are coming with them. This attitude is completely opposite to the congregation meetings. Why? They are PERSONALLY INVOLVED. Their opinions are valued, their progress is noted, and they work hard to qualify for assignments. . . . I know this can't be done everywhere; we do not have the personnel. But the concept is right, I feel, because it works.[81]

The elder himself says that the young men's 'loving to come' was "completely opposite to the congregation meetings" and that personal involvement and appreciation of their opinions were a significant part of the difference. What he did was on his own initiative, neither supported by the Society's own program nor encouraged by the Society.

81 Quoted from a letter sent by Robert Mackey, dated March 1, 1978.

In reality, if others, even elders, had begun following his example they would most certainly have been warned not to offer an alternative to the organization's own program.[82] That remains the case today.

It is a known fact that most Witnesses read only the scheduled material in the assigned book or magazine (if they even read that beforehand) and rarely take the time to look up or meditate on any Scriptures cited. In virtually every article or in any Scriptural discussion, the organization—its policies, goals, its claimed importance—are regularly interwoven into the discussion, and these color the understanding of the Scriptures cited, overshadow or even displace the sense of the context. Members are not encouraged to use their minds as individual mature Christians but are instead reminded constantly of the need to conform, to avoid anything resembling "independent thinking," to accept what the "faithful slave" serves them as if coming from God. It never seems to occur to them that for genuinely *personal* conviction there *must* be independent thinking, for we each must arrive at conclusions as individuals with the free exercise of conscience and of our mental powers.

Similar to the situation described in the text from Isaiah, the nourishment of the "spiritual banquet" proves to be more illusion than reality, and spiritual hunger remains. It is a sad fact that when an individual endeavors to increase his or her spiritual knowledge and growth by personal effort beyond the routinized program set out, more often than not this brings him or her into conflict with the organization.

Superior Cleanness and Unity?

> *Of course we shouldn't dare include ourselves in the same class as those who write their own testimonials… All they are doing, of course, is to measure themselves by their own standards or by comparisons within their own circle, and that doesn't make for accurate estimation.*—2 Corinthians 10:12, *Phillips Modern English.*

The morality level found among Jehovah's Witnesses is unquestionably much higher than in the world as a whole. I believe that on the basis of my own experience among them over many decades. The question is whether the moral level is so exceptionally high, and the incidence of misdeeds so remarkably low, as to fit the concept of a "spiritual paradise," one without equal anywhere else.

82 Mackey was not only City Overseer for Tampa, Florida, but also the person who recorded the gospel accounts for the Watch Tower's Bible tapes. I am quite certain that this granted him special consideration.

What is said here then, represents no attempt whatsoever to downgrade or minimize the good record of Witnesses for law-keeping or morality when contrasted with people in general. Nor is it a case of "damning with faint praise." The purpose is solely to consider whether that record is so notably superior as to justify the Watch Tower organization's own depiction of itself as a virtual island of morality, distinctive and superior to all other religions. The standards of judging that the organization uses in such a recommendation of itself deserve examination.

An illusionary picture can be created by a very selective use of experiences or expressions. Out of 100 experiences, 95 might be negative, but if only the 5 positive ones are made known it is possible to create a very favorable impression. It is also a false impression.

The reverse is likewise true, where a few negative factors are publicized and the more numerous favorable ones are suppressed, thus creating an equally false impression.

It would be wrong to assess the Witness organization by either such method. It would also be wrong for the Witness organization to assess other religions on the basis of such methods. What does the evidence show?

It would be extremely difficult to find any favorable statements about any religion other than their own in the publications of the Watch Tower Society, at least from the 1920s forward. By contrast, anything *unfavorable* about another belief system, as, for example, acts of immorality, dishonesty or of other wrongdoing, becomes material worthy of consideration for inclusion in their publications. The more unfavorable it is the more likely its being included. Whether the incident or circumstance or attitude is actually representative of the religious affiliation *as a whole* does not seem to be of concern. This critical standard is applied to all other religions. A very different standard, one virtually opposite, is applied to their own.

Only on rare occasions does one read an admission of specific wrongdoing by members within the Witness organization. One example appeared in the *Watchtower* of March 15, 1988 (page 17) regarding an elder who committed adultery with a married Witness woman. The woman's non-Witness husband went to the Kingdom Hall and fired a shotgun at the man and his wife. But it may be noted that, long before it appeared in the *Watchtower* magazine, this matter had already received publicity in the largest-circulation newspaper of New York city and hence was already "out in the open." It is hardly an example of openness or candor or humility on the part of an or-

ganization to acknowledge something that is already widely known.[83]

Not that anyone would rightly expect that an organization should air to the world each and every case of the trespasses and wrong acts of its individual members, for that could serve no valid purpose, and would be both unkind and harmful. What is wrong is to create an impression of great moral superiority by widely publicizing the failings of those of other beliefs, making it appear that these are common and typical of the membership as a whole, while almost totally suppressing any admission of similar failings on a similar scale within one's own belief system. But *are* such failings evident *on a similar scale* within Jehovah's Witnesses?

At the Brooklyn headquarters, as I know personally from having worked there, entire file cabinets in the Service Department are filled with the records of cases of wrongdoing, some minor, many of them major, within the Witness membership. The entire gamut of wrongdoing is covered, from fornication, adultery, homosexuality, incest and sexual molestation of children to fraud, theft, wife-beating, and murder. Comparable records to those in the U.S. may be found in the branch offices of the organization throughout the world. In another rare expression, the *Watchtower* of January 1, 1986 (page 13) acknowledged that the "spiritual paradise" offered no real guarantee of protection from immorality. It said:

> 12 **Shocking as it is, even some who have been prominent in Jehovah's organization have succumbed to immoral practices, including homosexuality, wife swapping, and child molesting. It is to be noted, also, that during the past year, 36,638 individuals had to be disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation, the greater number of them for practicing immorality.**

83 In another reported case in New York in 1987, a young woman who broke off her romantic relationship with a twenty-seven-year-old man later received a package from him containing what looked like a pen but which concealed a spring-out blade that cut her hand when she opened the package. A month later she received another package which she began to open and then realized who it was from—before she could push it away it exploded, causing cuts and breaking her thumb while blowing her 18-month-old niece across the room. The twenty-seven-year-old sender, charged with sending an explosive device by mail, was described by his employer as a "deeply religious Jehovah's Witness." The Chicago *Tribune* (November 15, 1990) reported a 16-year-olds' first shooting his father to death in cold blood and then waiting for his mother to return home and murdering her. Friends of the family are quoted as describing them as Jehovah's Witnesses who "did everything together." A former neighbor described the boy as "a little angel" who had been "doing door-to-door work with his parents since he was a young boy." Unlike the other case, these and similar Witness crimes are not reported in any Watch Tower publication.

As the statement quoted acknowledges, this wrongdoing is not limited to any one segment but reaches into all levels. Individuals in positions of authority at the international headquarters or in branch organizations are by no means exempt, and I can recall cases of branch representatives engaging in theft, stealing from the branch funds, having a record of alcoholism, engaging in adulterous sexual relations, in one case with a prostitute, in another with the wife of a missionary living at the branch office, and other moral failures.

As an example of giving a misleading appearance, the October 1, 1983 *Watchtower* (page 7) refers to a Quebec journalist who wrote favorably of a Witness convention in Montreal. It quotes him as saying:

> If they were the only people in the world, we would not at night have to bolt our doors shut and put on the burglar alarm.

He may think so. He does not know that at the international headquarters at Brooklyn, where the largest concentration of Witnesses on earth is to be found, it became necessary decades ago to install locks on all doors to living quarters and I can never recall a period of any length during my fifteen years there when there was not at least one Witness thief active within the "Bethel family." Periodic warnings were necessary from the head of the table as to leaving valuables unattended or unsecured. While the thievery or alcoholism or similar wrongs were limited to a relative few, it needs to be remembered that this was in a community of persons then numbering under 1,900, hence like a fairly small town, but with a specialized population from which one might expect a far smaller incidence of wrongdoing than in the small town.

The Watch Tower publications consistently claim that regular activity in door-to-door "field service" constitutes a strong protection against spiritual weakness and wrongdoing. Yet most of those just described in branch offices and the international headquarters were active in such work. The evidence to show that the incidence of wrongdoing is to any measurable degree reduced by such factors as field service activity or meeting attendance is lacking; nor is there anything to show that cases of wrongdoing among those in "full-time" service are any less than among those not in such service. In a letter to the Brooklyn headquarters, a Witness of over thirty years of association wrote:

> I'm afraid my attempt to convey what is happening here is bound to sound overstated, because the reality of the situation is pretty grim. I think of the four persons in the congregation who have been suicidal (two of them pioneers). I think of the serious marriage problems in the congregation (at least a half dozen

> pioneers included). These problems appear to be directly related to the congregational problems, not isolated events. I remember talking to a sister who had been auxiliary pioneering many months while she was "planning to leave the truth next month so I can leave my husband," to quote her. She had asked me to drive her to [a certain city] to see an elder there who is a trained counselor, but she canceled the appointment. When I later found she had done something drastically foolhardy and asked her why she hadn't sought help before that happened, she replied, "I had to get my time in first." Her attitude is not unique here.[84]

I think that if any Witness were to pause and compare the claims made with the reality to be seen in virtually any area, he would be compelled to acknowledge that the number of cases of marital unfaithfulness, broken marriages and accompanying divorce, of relatively unstable family relationships, of emotionally disturbed children, juvenile delinquency and drug problems, and similar failures, are by no means rare, that they are actually quite frequent.

I know of men who became elders and, as a result of being assigned to participate in "judicial hearings," were shocked to realize the amount of wrongdoing, and sometimes the extreme *kinds* of wrongdoing, taking place within the congregation. While praise of the superiority of Jehovah's Witnesses as employees is regularly claimed, and quotations of favorable expressions by employers frequently appear in the organization's magazine, I have personally had business man after business man—among Jehovah's Witnesses—tell me that often their Witness employees gave them considerably more difficulty than those classed as "worldly" employees. Though there was generally scrupulous avoidance of committing *major* wrongs, petty dishonesty, misuse of time, lack of cooperation, substandard quality of work, and other failures to act in the best interests of the business, were evident to a degree that simply did not accord with the organizational boasts made.

Many religious affiliations could benefit from the example of Jehovah's Witnesses in the area of racial integration, in their de-emphasizing of class distinctions, their comparatively strong sense of commitment and obligation toward anyone, though otherwise a complete stranger to them, who is a member in good standing in the organization. Perhaps some of the most appealing—and dramatic—features in their history are those occasions when they have been faced with crisis situations, in times of intense persecution or natural disasters or war, when many of them have shown a will-

84 Letter dated July 10, 1985; writer's name withheld for reasons of privacy.

ingness to risk their own safety, possessions or even their own lives in the interest, in one way or another, of fellow members. The accounts of the experiences of Witnesses during the Nazi regime in Germany, during the Duvalier premiership of Quebec, or during the period of mob violence in the United States in the 1940s, make absorbing reading. The sincerity of those who demonstrated a courageous and selfless concern for others rightly goes unquestioned, and I find their example both encouraging and laudable.

Having personally experienced a measure of what it means to live through years of physical difficulty, mob violence, or the dangers of imprisonment due to engaging in meetings and other activity when these have been banned by an oppressive government, I do not underestimate the courage this often requires, the determination to hold firm to certain standards. As a sharer in such trials I do not feel that it shows any disrespect to consider also whether these quite dramatic actions necessarily authenticate the claims of an unequalled spiritual unity, or can be viewed as distinguishing the organization thereby supported as containing earth's only genuine Christians. Looking at matters from a broad perspective, there is no question in my mind that whatever I myself did in such circumstances was not at all something unique to Jehovah's Witnesses, but rather had undoubtedly been duplicated, or excelled, by people of other faiths in quite comparable circumstances, whether the dangers they faced arose from persecution or were instead due to seeking to help people by going into areas fraught with peril because of violence or savagery or disease or religious animosity and hatred. Nor do I feel it shows any lack of appreciation for such examples of self-sacrifice to recognize that what is done in times of crisis is not always indicative of the norm prevailing in more ordinary times, in the day-to-day living that composes most of human life in any society. I am satisfied that the expressions of giving, of self-sacrifice, of compassion, fellow feeling, brotherly attachment and strong friendship shown in such day-to-day ordinariness, when constant and untiring, in the final analysis are often of greater significance than similar expressions made in the heat of more dramatic circumstances. I believe the evidence demonstrates the rightness of that view.[85]

85 With regard even to cults such as that of the Moonies, Steve Hassan says in his book: "Relationships are usually superficial within these groups because sharing of deep personal feelings, especially negative ones, is highly discouraged. This feature of cult life prevails even though a member may feel he is closer to his comrades than he has ever been to anyone before. Indeed, when cult members go through hardship or persecution, they do feel a depth of camaraderie and shared martyrdom that is exceptional. But because the only real allegiance is to the leader, a closer look shows that such ties are actually shallow and sometimes just private fantasy." (Page 82.)

I would make one final reference to the branch memorandum quoted earlier. It is from Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation and the one with the largest number of Witnesses (over 100,000 at the time of the memorandum's writing). The memorandum contains many favorable statements about Nigerian Witnesses, their enduring trials, their efforts to maintain neutrality during the Biafran war, the difficulties faced by children due to refusal to salute the flag. It stresses the firmness of the Witnesses in holding to the organization's positions on these issues, a firmness commented on by some onlookers.

The memorandum also responded to an inquiry as to manifestation of the fruitage of God's Spirit in the normal affairs of daily life and here again various favorable experiences were related. All of this was what one might expect, was customary to such reports. What differed was the frankness expressed in acknowledging the negative side of matters. It showed that the unity, racial and otherwise, supposedly so exclusively and distinctively the possession of Jehovah's Witnesses is considerably less than ideal. The memorandum states:

> Sometimes situations develop in congregations where there are divisions along tribal or family lines, showing that in some cases fleshly connections are stronger than spiritual ones. Then there are those brothers in many congregations who do not really associate with other members of the congregation. They come to the meetings with the opening song and leave with the closing song. Very little communication exists. Some have practically no social contact with other brothers, or only with a select few. There are, too, those who harbor animosities and never speak to certain brothers at any time.
>
> Unbrotherly attitudes even show up among elders. Elders' meetings have been known to be forums for bickering and recriminations. Some have violent arguments in which they throw uncomplimentary names at each other. Sometimes tribal or racial considerations influence the acceptance or rejection of suggestions.
>
> Disconcertingly, often brothers show unbrotherly attitudes in business and employee/employer relationships. Employed brothers sometimes exploit and rob brothers who employ them; and some [Witness] employers treat their employees harshly and dishonorably, even without consideration for their need to attend meetings and engage in field service. Some have come to grief and relationships destroyed over business dealings, either through misunderstandings or because of outright dishonesty. Sometimes brothers prosecute accusations against brothers as they would through lawyers in worldly courts, and a few do go to worldly courts. Even in the case of repentant sinners, elders often have a tendency to be unmerciful. [86]

There is no intent here to imply that these conditions are typical of all Nigerian Witnesses. I visited Nigeria in 1979 and met a number of fine

86 Pages 20, 21 of the Nigerian memorandum.

persons among the Witnesses there. At the same time, in its memorandum the branch had been requested to supply information, not based on rare or isolated incidents, but dealing with genuine problems affecting Witnesses in their country. That is the only reason I include this quotation. Not only the use of "many," "often," and similar expressions, but the whole tenor of the report, makes clear that the picture of a *unique* spiritual paradise, *superlatively* abundant in the fruitage of God's Spirit, is hardly in harmony with the facts. It shows Witnesses to be quite like people to be found in other religious denominations where similar problems occur.

The conditions reported by the Nigerian Branch are neither surprising nor unusual. If not the same conditions, then comparable ones can be found in congregations of Jehovah's Witnesses in most countries of the world. What is unusual, is the forthrightness of the branch personnel in acknowledging the existence and extent of the problems. Unusual, because organizational representatives as a whole are hesitant to present matters to the headquarters that are not in accord with the concept of a spiritual paradise state. In the years that I spent at the international headquarters the vast majority of communications presented only the "bright" side of matters, items such as are published in Watch Tower literature. When reports of a more candid nature came to the Governing Body or one of its committees, they rarely were considered at length. I think it can be truthfully said that perceptive information, pointing out any lack of genuine spirituality and its root causes, created a certain sense of discomfort among the members, as though they would prefer not to hear them. They seemed to find them disturbing, unsettling, not conforming to the published claims of a worldwide community that enjoys superlative spiritual health and unequalled brotherly unity, a community in which the only true Christians on earth are to be found. The more frank the report, and the more insight shown as to the underlying nature of the problems, the shorter the time the Governing Body members seemed willing to spend in discussing it. Their quickness in moving on to other matters, or to portions of the report more in conformity with the published picture, brought to mind the description of Israel that God spoke through his prophet Isaiah:

> [They] have said to the ones seeing: "You must not see," and to the ones having visions: "You must not envision any straightforward things. Speak to us smooth [pleasant, *NIV*] things; envision deceptive [seductive, *NEB*] things." [87]

87 Isaiah 30:10.

I cannot feel that love of truth, and particularly concern for people and their spiritual interests, can allow for such an "ivory tower" frame of mind.

There is, then, no intention whatsoever of portraying Jehovah's Witnesses as an essentially immoral community. They are not. I believe that among Jehovah's Witnesses as a whole the majority are decent people of good morality. Nor should one expect perfection within any community of people. But the evidence needed to support claims of *distinctive moral superiority over all other religious communities*, so that there is cause for boasting, is actually lacking. No organizational census covering these areas is ever taken and therefore no statistics are available. On the basis of nearly sixty years of association and of acquaintance with members in places throughout the world, I personally have no question that if such statistics were available they would show that there is no great difference in the percentage of failed marriages, divorce, youthful wrongdoing, or sinful conduct of whatever kind, between the Watch Tower organization membership and that of many other religious affiliations. In a few cases, particularly among certain religions that give especially great emphasis to strong family relationships, the difference might in fact prove unfavorable to the Witnesses. What evidence there is certainly provides no basis for public declaration of being far purer than all others (the "I thank you God that I am not as other men are" syndrome of the Pharisee in Jesus' parable).

The probable response by the organization to this would be that Jehovah's Witnesses are superior in that they take action against wrongdoers and disfellowship those they find to be unrepentant, thus maintaining a "clean organization." No one can fail to appreciate a concern to act where wrongdoing is manifest. As has been seen in an earlier chapter, however, their record in disfellowshiping people is considerably more notable than their record in helping wrongdoers to correct and be restored, which is the mission of a true shepherd of the sheep.[88] Any claim of superiority in cleanness over other religious communities needs to rest more on this latter factor, and also on a demonstrated ability to produce an environment that encourages and helps people through spiritual strength to avoid wrongdoing, so that the incidence of such is exceptionally low. Mere punishment of wrongdoing does not of itself make any organization "clean" or superior in its cleanness to other organizations. A government might consistently exile all

88 See Chapters 10 and 11.

those disagreeing with its decisions and rule. But that would not prove that the country was free of dissidence or discontent—not if the exiling continued to go on year after year. Nor would the practice of executing all criminals mean that a country was free of crime and superior to other countries in enjoying a crime-free environment, particularly not if crimes (and subsequent executions) continued to occur at essentially the same rate as always. The statement sometimes made that there are no Jehovah's Witnesses found in prisons (for reasons other than conscience) can also be misleading. If a Witness, found guilty by a court for committing a crime, is pronounced disfellowshiped *before or upon being committed to prison*, this does not change the fact that *he was a Witness at the time of committing the crime*.

In actuality, there is never a time when the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses can rightfully boast of being uniquely "clean" for there is never any point in time in which there are not within it thousands of persons who right at that time are engaging in serious wrongdoing. At this writing there are a percentage of persons within the organization engaging in marital infidelity, fornication, drunkenness, acts of greed and dishonesty, and the other forms of wrongdoing already contained in the extensive organizational files set aside for that purpose. There are individuals among these, of course, who in time will, without any "judicial" hearing, voluntarily turn around from such course and lead exemplary lives. At the same time, others have been engaging in such conduct over a period of many years; some will not be discovered for more years to come, if at all.[89] This continues to be the case despite the thousands disfellowshiped annually. Nor is there anything to show that the percentage of wrongdoers is less today than it was ten or twenty or thirty years ago.[90] More crucial to the validation of a supposed moral superiority, is the organization's inability to show that their percentage is any lower than the percentage to be found in many other religious communities. There are claims, of course. But there

89 As only one example, in 1985, the September 23 issue of the *Alberta Report* (Canada) carried an article about the conviction of an attorney who was "jailed for stealing more than $200,000 from his clients between 1973 and 1984—more than half of it from fellow Jehovah's Witnesses at the church where he was an elder." Many of the Witness victims over the ten-year period were Ukrainian and unable to read or write English and they "put their complete trust in" the Witness elder. The victims included one elderly woman who had entrusted to the man an entire insurance settlement for a car accident that left her a paraplegic. As a result of the elder's dishonesty she had received less than half of it. (This attorney was a featured speaker at one of the annual Witness doctor-lawyer gatherings.)

90 The report made in the 1986 *Watchtower* of 36,000 disfellowshiped is no anomaly. Each year sees a similar figure. 1988, for example, saw another 40,000 disfellowshiped worldwide (figure from *The Milwaukee Journal*, of May 18, 1989, quoting Merton Campbell, of the Watch Tower headquarters staff).

is no factual evidence to support the claims. Not that Jehovah's Witnesses are necessarily worse in this area than other religious fellowships and communities, or that they are not better than *some* religious fellowships. Their record simply does not substantiate the claims made for a *unique* superiority over every other religious affiliation. It does not in any way authenticate the picture drawn of a uniquely clean "spiritual paradise."

There is no question in my mind that the legalistic approach to Christianity, the multitudes of rules, and, at the same time, a frequent double standard, all contribute to an essentially blurred viewpoint of what Christian righteousness is. When the individual feels he or she is not under observation by organizational authority, these factors actually may produce a weakened resistance to wrongdoing.

Those Most Affected

Not all are affected to the same degree by the factors that have been considered. There are, of course, as there were in Jesus' day, those who seem satisfied to follow some specific routine laid out for them, some of whom even take pleasure (and, all too often, pride) in the observance of traditional requirements and structured programs. Others are not particularly affected because they simply are not concerned about measuring up or gaining approval. Their very apathy shields them.

It is a sad fact that those most affected by the persistent pressure to do more and more in organizationally directed activities are those persons among the Witnesses who are the most sensitive and conscientious. For many of these, the argumentation—that subtly implies guilt if one does not follow the organization's "suggestions" and "recommendations" in striving for "increased service"—creates a constant concern that they are not doing enough, not measuring up. As if on a treadmill, there is never a real sense of accomplishment but only the need to continue responding month by month to demands for *performance*, demands on their time that may not be openly stated but which are presented in ways that imply a lack of faith or of zeal or of love if one does not respond. So while many Witnesses just 'go along with the crowd' and show little effect from the pressure, the real test of Christian religion is not what it does for those who appear free from need, but what it does for those who are in a sense frail, afflicted. God's rebuke to the spiritual leaders of the flock of Israel focused on this, saying:

> "The sickened ones you have not strengthened, and the ailing one you have not healed, and the broken one you have not bandaged, and the dispersed one you have not brought back, and the lost one you have not sought to find." . . ." "I myself shall feed

> my sheep, and I myself shall make them lie down," is the utterance of the Lord Jehovah. "The lost one I shall search for, and the dispersed one I shall bring back, and the broken one I shall bandage and the ailing one I shall strengthen, but the fat one and the strong one I shall annihilate. I shall feed that one with judgment." . . . "Here I am, I myself, and I shall certainly judge between a plump sheep and a lean sheep, for the reason that with flank and with shoulder you kept pushing and with your horns you kept shoving all the sickened ones until you had scattered them to the outside."[91]

The same principles apply to Christian shepherds, and it is primarily their concern, not for the "sleek and the strong sheep" (*NIV*), but for the weak and injured and broken ones that tests the genuineness of their devotion to the flock. Of all those whom Christian shepherds are to "treat with tenderness," certainly these should be foremost.[92] To fail to recognize the pressures and strains that daily life in today's world already subjects such ones to, is to be blind to their actual condition and needs. To push such ones by mental and emotional "prods," to fail to provide them with needed emotional and spiritual rest and relief, can only bring the disapproval of the fine Shepherd, Christ Jesus.

These thoughts were expressed in a letter written in 1977 and directed to Watch Tower president Fred Franz. The writer said:

> I have the feeling that especially sensitive persons, that already have troubles coping with a demanding, cruel world, are loaded down by us with a lot of additional pressures and threats of destruction. The ones that really try to be faithful in all things, and then realize they are only imperfect men and women, that will never reach the combination of your strict goals for service, meeting studies, behavior, etc., are in danger of breaking down under the combined pressure of requirements that are planted in them one by one through methods they are not even aware of, so that they are not able to weigh the order of priority of all those requirements and fall into depression in trying to fulfill them all.
>
> I found that I could only cope by reducing my exposure to your constant pressure. I attended only selected meetings and left certain meetings out because they made me depressed and upset.

The writer of the letter was René Greutmann, a native of Switzerland. I quote here from his expressions since I believe the experiences he relates sum up and confirm much of what has been said in this entire chapter.

91 Ezekiel 34:4, 15, 16, 20, 21.
92 Acts 20:29.

As a Witness, René had spent time in prison for refusing to serve in the Swiss army. He felt a desire to help those mentally ill, trained as a male nurse and obtained work at a psychiatric hospital in Zurich. He resigned after a year or so due to the issue of having to serve patients food that contained blood plasma. He thus demonstrated his loyal adherence to the Witness stands regarding the military and blood.

In his letter to the Watch Tower president he said his reason for writing was:

> . . . to give you feedback on how your teachings and methods came across to me during the last twenty-two years of my being a Jehovah's Witness. It is my hope that this contribution may shed some light on many depressions and suicides among very conscientious brothers and sisters.

He then gave details of four suicides among Witnesses that he personally knew of and other cases of Witnesses needing psychiatric care.[93] René, however, had a much more personal case to relate.

He related how he met and married his wife, Clarisse. A zealous Witness, she had moved to the German-speaking part of Switzerland, lived with a family of Witnesses, and in time started "pioneer" service, while working half-days as a secretary to support herself. She often bicycled up to an hour to reach her assigned rural territory. Conscientious, she pushed herself to the point where she felt unable to continue, but was still encouraged to keep on by the circuit overseer to whom she spoke. Adding to her stress, she experienced problems with a Witness, a married man who "made passes at her." She reported the matter to the congregation overseer but thereafter suffered the anger of the married man's wife for having done so. Before long she gave way to an emotional breakdown. Her parents brought her home to the French-speaking part of Switzerland but she was extremely depressed. The following morning she went to the roof of the four-story building and jumped.

93 This is not something exceptional. I know similarly of several suicides among Witnesses, including one occurring while I was at the international headquarters in which a staff member jumped to his death from the top of one the Society's factory buildings, another in 1990 when a longtime member of the staff and a former member of the Factory Committee jumped to his death from the third floor of one of the Society's residences. And I have correspondence listing an even greater number of suicides known to those writing. Any tally of the number in other lands, particularly in the industrialized nations, would undoubtedly be considerable—though such matters are generally kept quiet and never published.

She survived, but incurred multiple fractures on both legs and pelvis. The doctors had to amputate her right leg below the knee.

When René met her she had learned to walk with an artificial limb. But she had never been able to recover from the effects of what had happened. She felt that she had failed as a pioneer and thus had failed God and that her purpose in life was finished. She could not find forgiveness for herself for the things she had done. In his letter directed to the Watch Tower organization, René wrote:

> Naturally, she later heard that 'nobody had forced her to go beyond her capacity in pioneering.' Neither the persons that made these comments nor Clarisse knew of the power of constantly repeated "recommendations" and "counsel" in a tiring program. *But you know it and God knows it.*

René, found Clarisse to be a lovely woman despite her handicap, normally a bright, outgoing person. They married, after three years had a child, and René, later took her to live in California in the hope that it would enable her to break with the past and overcome her feeling of guilt and depression. They associated with a Witness congregation but found little understanding or warmth of acceptance and this disturbed Clarisse. René, recognized that his inability to give total support to all the organization's teachings and practices may have contributed to the local Witnesses not giving much attention to them.[94] He said he felt that to gain full acceptance he would have had to "submit to all teachings without thinking; to become a tape recorder that faithfully repeats everything

94 Among other things he viewed the practice of reporting time on "report slips" as undesirable, feeling that this had a coercive effect, something that even headquarters' staff members such as Karl Adams and Robert Wallen basically recognized, as we have seen.

that it is told." He adds, "I don't know how long I could have taken this without getting depressed myself."

Clarisse underwent psychiatric treatment for a while in Switzerland and then moved back to the United States, but with only minimal improvement in her feeling of depression. The sense of having failed religiously persisted. René, offered to move back to Switzerland but she expressed her preference to stay in California. One night in October 1975 she left for an appointment at Kaiser Hospital. She did not return. The following morning their car was located, parked near the Golden Gate Bridge. Her body was found floating in the waters of the bay by the bridge from which she had jumped. She was 34 years old.

I realize that one cannot assign anyone's problems entirely to a single source. Nor did René do so, candidly recognizing not only his wife's somewhat fragile emotional makeup, but also his own imperfections and inabilities, wondering what more he might have done. But he also had no doubt there was an underlying factor that worked strongly against all efforts to bring relief to his wife. As he says in his letter to the organization:

> I was reaching out with my arms and with my heart towards her. But I do not know how she perceived the world and the people around her, I was not in her shoes and artificial limb. I did not suffer her pain and distress. She was the type of person that could not protect themselves if they are programmed with overlapping and conflicting requirements.
>
> . . . I would love to recommend our Assembly to unstable and sensitive persons, but I can not out of the depth of my heart recommend a religion whose pressure nearly killed me and that, I am convinced, was one of the biggest factors for the tragedy of my wife and others.

When approached by René, the elders in the California congregation refused to conduct a funeral service, based on their understanding of material about funerals for persons committing suicide in the *Watchtower* magazine of July 15, 1975, pages 447, 448. They told him they had to 'protect the good reputation of the congregation.' René could not see the rightness of such inflexible position. As he wrote:

> We don't have to approve of her act. It was wrong, it was a sin. A funeral to me is not an approval of someone's lifestyle, but an act of support and love for the family left behind.
>
> . . . I gave her the funeral service myself. I went to the funeral home with my mother. I put a few roses on her body, caressed her for the last time and then went on my knees and prayed, thanking God for the time we had together, praying that he would remember her in the resurrection. I prayed that he would help me to increase my love and awareness of the needs of the people around me, to help me to raise our child to be a loving responsible Christian.

It may be pointed out that two years later, in the June 1, 1977 issue of the *Watchtower*, an article was published specifically allowing for an elder's conducting a funeral of one who had taken his or her life due to "extreme despondency or mental derangement." This was not as a result of René Greutmann's letter, for it never came to the Governing Body. Another incident brought discussion of the subject. In advocating a changed viewpoint during the discussion, I recall personally calling attention to David's funeral dirge after the deaths of Saul and Jonathan in which David included *both* men in his eulogy, though the wounded Saul, seeking to avoid abuse at the hands of the Philistines, had taken his own life.[95] The change reflected in the abovementioned *Watchtower* is good, commendable. The elders in the California congregation, having that material, would undoubtedly have acted differently as a result of it. But I think what needs to be noted is that their actions, their thinking, their feelings were, and probably still are, *governed entirely by what the organization says*, not by what human compassion and reason and Scriptural principles and the example of God's Son would move one to do. In making its change regarding funerals for suicides, the June 1, 1977 *Watchtower* article presented no Scriptural argument as a reason for the change. It simply made the pronouncement that "Because of such fine purposes being served [by a funeral discourse], it seems that a Christian minister could see his way clear to conduct" a funeral in such cases. The organization had spoken and now elders might do what perhaps their own hearts would have normally motivated them to do.

If, however, the organization had not spoken, they would not feel free to act in such a compassionate way, would doubtless feel guilty if they did so, would certainly feel concerned about maintaining their eldership if they failed to conform fully to the organizational policy, and bereaved family members would continue to receive the same refusal René received after his wife's tragic death. I am forced to wonder what there is in all this that can in any way be described as spiritually "paradisaical."

Sometime after his wife's death, René and his small son returned to Switzerland. He had learned that while his wife was undergoing treatment in Switzerland, a man on duty as a Frontier Guard at Lake Geneva had seen her, fully clothed, walking out into the water and had gone after her, pulling her from the water. Coincidentally, the man's wife had known Clarisse as a child. René visited the couple to thank them for what they had then done on his now-dead wife's behalf. During the conversation he mentioned that Jehovah's Witnesses did not serve in the army, the reason being that

95 2 Samuel 1:17-27.

they did not want to kill. The man's wife replied in a way that René, has never forgotten. She said, "Sometime we also kill with words."

Whether or not the Watch Tower president personally saw or read René's letter I cannot say. I know that the letter did not come before the Governing Body, but that was normal. Whatever the case, the president did not answer it, as it was passed to one of the men on the "correspondence desks" for reply. I think the overall tone of that reply reflects remarkably that of the expressions made by the congregation elders to whom René appealed:

TELEPHONE (212) 625-1240 WATCHTOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY OF NEW YORK, INC. CABLE WATCHTOWER

117 ADAMS STREET, BROOKLYN, NEW YORK 11201, U.S.A.

EF:ESC November 14, 1977

Rene Greutmann
211 Higdon Avenue
Mountain View, CA 94041

Dear Brother Greutmann:

Your additional letter received last month and addressed to Brother Franz has been directed to the Writing Department.

We note the circumstances leading up to the death of your wife. We regretted very much to learn of the emotional turmoil that led up to what appears to be her taking her own life. While you have drawn certain conclusions, Brother Greutman, as to what influenced her in this regard, we are sure you appreciate that it is very difficult to judge matters when it comes to human emotions and motivation. It is best to leave matters in Jehovah's merciful hands, as we continue to look to him for guidance, knowing that He will judge every situation with the proper balance of mercy and justice. You have attempted to place some of the blame upon Jehovah's organization, claiming that what is expected of Jehovah's people in the way of attending meetings and sharing in the service is too much and leads to frustration and even emotional problems. But here again you are attempting to judge Jehovah's people and the Christian congregation by what you have personally concluded. To what extent your own attitude and view on matters, and the way you have handled matters with your wife, have contributed to developments with your wife, is a question which we would be unable to answer for you. As a frank observation, Brother Greutmann, we would recommend that you recognize how Jehovah is leading and teaching his people as a whole, and the evident blessing that they have from Jehovah. You are inclined to find fault with the encouragement to share regularly in attending the meetings and in preaching the good news, feeling that what is said at times sets forth more than what is reasonable for God's people. The brothers here at headquarters, through the publications and otherwise, and the elders in the local congregations, are merely endeavoring to discharge their responsibilities before Jehovah in providing encouragement and help to our brothers and sisters worldwide in remaining faithful to Jehovah and in fulfilling the commission to preach the good news of the kingdom in all the world as a witness. Each one individually has to decide how he or she can respond to the encouragement from the Scriptures according to his or her own circumstances and abilities. When you honestly appraise the encouragement given, there is no attempt to regiment or control the thinking of the brothers and sisters so as to make them robots. Your claim that the organization is attempting to brainwash or control the thoughts of the brothers and sisters is really unfounded. Unless of course, you are pointing to what Jesus and the apostles did in training

Christians and helping them to do as the apostle Paul said at 1 Corinthians 1:10 to, "be fitly united in the same mind and in the same line of thought."

May Jehovah bless your desire to serve him in accord with the prayer of the apostle Paul in behalf of the Philippian Christians at Philippians 1:9-11.

Your brothers in Jehovah's service,

Watchtower B. & T. Society 96
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This response is almost entirely devoted to justification of the organization's course and, bluntly stated, a put-down for the man who clearly wrote out of concern for a particular kind of persons within the organization and their welfare. The letter by the headquarters staff member contains at most *one sentence* that might be considered slightly comforting. As René mildly expressed it, "their reply was not very encouraging to me, left me rather on my own with my questioning and searching for truth and love." He experienced some serious problems following his wife's death but in time, through prayer and apart from the organization, overcame these and regained stability.

I believe that the combination of evidence, viewed on a worldwide basis, reveals why it is reasonable to say that sensitive and emotionally fragile persons in particular are at risk in what is called the "spiritual paradise." I cannot help but think again of the prophet's words, "You hustle the weary with flank and shoulder, you butt them with your horns until you have driven them away."[97]

At the beginning of this consideration I expressed a sense of sadness and what has been discussed only heightens that sense. What appeared to offer such promise, what seemed to lead the way to something beautiful, has proven quite otherwise. The fine qualities to be found among many have been diverted from their normal outlet. There has been a depersonalizing, and to some extent a dehumanizing, effect as a result of the elevation, almost the deification, of organizational authority. The sadness, as in the case of the former Roman Catholic theologian, results from "instances of the damage done to persons by workings of an impersonal and unfree system." Not human interests, not the love of people that moved God to give his Son on their behalf, but the interests of an organization to sustain itself, to implant its essentially denominational views in more and more persons and extend and maintain its authority over them, has in effect 'slain the idea which gave it birth.'

96 The symbol EF indicates that the letter was written by Fred Rusk of the headquarters Writing Department.

97 Ezekiel 34:21, *NEB*.

17

The Challenge of Christian Freedom

If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free. . . . If the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.—John 8:31, 32, 36, *Revised Standard Version.*

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom.—2 Corinthians 3:17, *Revised Standard Version.*

FOLLOWERS OF God's Son should be lovers of the freedom he gives, should cherish it, defend it, sacrifice whatever is necessary to retain it. That freedom is more than political freedom. It frees us from the frustration brought by enslavement to decadence, from the sense of guilt before God, from the fear of death and from the fear of man or devil, for it carries with it the hope "to be freed from the shackles of mortality and enter upon the liberty and splendour of the children of God."[1]

It is also the freedom to be the person we truly desire to be, strive to be, a person who reflects the life of the One each of us follows, though expressed individually as the unique personalities we are. Paul was not a Peter, and Peter was not a John, nor was Mary a Priscilla, or Priscilla a Dorcas. Yet each reflected in his or her life the teachings and qualities and spirit of the one they followed, the one in whom they placed faith as the Son of God. There is a beauty to such individuality, a beauty that imposed conformity and rigid uniformity, with their depersonalizing—and sometimes dehumanizing—effect smother and suppress. Rather than being like "peas in a pod," people can be like flowers in a garden, distinctive, variegated, even contrasting, yet neither weedlike, ugly nor ill-smelling, and all blending together to contribute to the loveliness of the garden as a whole.

1 Romans 8:21, *NEB*.

Totalitarian control, whether political or religious, fears individuality, views it as a threat. That fear is a sign of weakness, not of strength. Similarly falsehood fears truth, shrinks away from its light, seeks to hide from it.[2] It may, either aggressively or by devious means, try to blot out that light, but seeks to evade meeting truth face to face in honest contest. Unity based on a forced uniformity, though solid in outward appearance, is actually fragile. Unlike the unity based on truth and on love, the perfect bond of union, such imposed unity has no inner, natural strength; it survives only through manipulation, coercion and fear.[3]

I think here of a letter from a woman in California who, with her daughters, had studied with Witnesses, and began to share in meetings, and engage in door-to-door field service. She wrote:

> I have been studying with the Witnesses for about a year and have been under ever-increasing pressure to fall into line with all the organizational views. What started out to be a pleasant and informative Bible study has become a suffocating of our own spiritual identity. It is interesting that while feeling this kind of pressure it becomes difficult to think clearly. A fear has been planted that we would be following Satan's system and moving away from the "God-inspired" organization.

It is easy to render lip-service to the example set by individuals of the past who, often at great cost to themselves, did not allow intimidation to keep them from seeking truth and making it known. Watch Tower publications frequently contain articles commending the integrity to truth and conscience that earlier martyrs and reformers displayed—men like Wycliffe, Tyndale, Michael Servetus, or John Hus, who resisted the choking power of religious censorship, went uncowed by the coercive pressure and condemnation of religious authority. Other articles speak approvingly of various break-away, non-conformist, minority groups such as the Waldenses, the Lollards, the Anabaptists, all of whom declared themselves as placing loyalty to Scriptural truth above loyalty to organizational authority and teaching.[4] In all this, however, one cannot but be impressed by the parallel with those religious authorities in Jesus' day, who, as he said, 'built tombs for the prophets and decorated the graves of righteous men of the past,' and said,

2 John 3:19-21.
3 Colossians 3:14.
4 The *Watchtower* of August 1, 1981, pages 12-15, for example, speaks of the "dissident groups" forming the Waldenses, of their boldness in speaking out against various church teachings and in holding that "the Bible is the one source of religious truth," believing also "Jesus to be the only intermediary between God and man."

"If we had lived in the times of our ancestors we should never have joined in the killing of the prophets." Despite their professions, the course of those religious leaders showed that they had the same spirit as their ancestors, who brought about the death of the organizationally rejected prophets.[5] In parallel fashion, while honoring those dissenting individuals and non-conformist groups of the past, the Watch Tower organization employs the identical weapons that were used against them—organizational censorship, intimidation, pressure, coercion and excommunication—to silence any attempt today at free, open discussion of the validity of its teachings and exercise of authority. Those it now labels as heretical are to be viewed as dead by all its members. It praises the courage that made men and women in the past hold to their convictions, condemns the same course now as born of a disruptive, prideful spirit, as evidence of rebellion against God, and in doing so uses language strongly reminiscent of the ecclesiastical condemnations of the past. Yet human history is surely the richer for containing the examples that such men and women of conscience set in their stand for freedom.

Attaining Spiritual Growth as Free Persons

> *My brothers, don't be children but use your intelligence! By all means be innocent as babes as far as evil is concerned, but where your minds are concerned be full-grown men!*—1 Corinthians 14:20, *Phillips Modern English.*

The whole purpose of Christian teaching is to bring us to spiritual maturity, Christian adulthood, "measured by nothing less than the full stature of Christ."[6] As one translation presents Paul's words to Ephesian Christians:

> We must not be babies any longer, blown about and swung around by every wind of doctrine through the trickery of men with their ingenuity in inventing error. We must lovingly hold to the truth and grow up into perfect union with him who is the head—Christ himself.[7]

Childhood is a time of little responsibility, of relatively few choices and personal decisions. The child looks to parents or others to exercise this responsibility, to set standards. Particularly when small, he feels

5 Matthew 23:29-35, *PME*.
6 Ephesians 4:13, *NEB*.
7 Ephesians 4:14, 15, *AT*.

dependent on them, fears being left alone, insecure without their presence. Adulthood normally brings release from that dependence and therefore brings with it responsibility and a multitude of choices and personal decisions. The transition is not an easy one. Yet it is a step we each must take or we remain stunted in our development. Any clinging to a childish state will ill fit us for success as adults. Our happiness and whatever of true value we accomplish in life is inseparably tied up with our willingness to assume the responsibility of being grown men and women. What is often excusable in the child is not in the adult. As the apostle Paul expresses it:

> When I was a child, my speech, my outlook, and my thoughts were all childish. When I grew up, I had finished with childish things.[8]

Only a system that wishes to exercise exaggerated control over others, to dominate them and their thinking, would wish to see people continue in a childish state, would hinder or even block their growth toward less and less dependence on that system and more and more personal strength and ability to make sound decisions on their own. The apostle states that Christ gave "gifts in men" to his followers, but all these, whether apostles, prophets, evangelizers, shepherds, or teachers, were given precisely to help people "grow up," to become, each of them, like their Head, able to stand on their own as spiritually mature adults, not to remain like children dependent on such men.[9] Those men were not to try to make persons feel *indebted* to themselves, saying, as does the Watch Tower organization, "Why, where did you learn what you have learned? Was it not from us?" and seek to make people feel *under obligation* to follow their lead implicitly on such basis, and to feel ungrateful or disrespectful if they did not. To the contrary they should say with apostle:

> What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who makes things grow.[10]

Not to be "anything" amounts to being *nothing*. The true servant of God would be repelled by the thought of making others feel under obligation to himself, recognizing his own relative insignifi-

8 1 Corinthians 13:11, *NEB*.
9 Ephesians 4:8, 11-16.
10 1 Corinthians 3:5-7, *NIV*.

cance and inability, and the overriding importance of God's power and wisdom in all that is accomplished.[11] As Paul puts it:

> In any case, brother, has anybody given you some special right? [Who makes you, my friend, so important? *NEB*] What do you have that was not given to you? And if it was given, how can you boast as though it were not [why take the credit to yourself, *NEB*]? . . .
>
> Is it that you have everything you want—that you are rich already, in possession of your kingdom, with us left outside? . . . Here we are, fools for the sake of Christ, while you are the learned men in Christ; we have no power, but you are influential; you are celebrities, we are nobodies.[12]

Whatever any such Christian servants might have in the way of knowledge or understanding or ability to be of Christian service, it had all been received from God as His gift. Whoever they were and whatever service they rendered, all those men in turn were themselves "gifts" to their fellow Christians, not governors placed in charge of them. The indebtedness and the sense of obligation that gratitude produces rightly goes to the Gift-giver, not to the thing or person given. Thus the apostle says to his fellow Christians:

> So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas [Peter] or the world or life or death or the present or the future—<u>all are yours</u>, and you are of Christ and Christ is of God.[13]

Yes, whoever they may be, they are, in effect, the possession of those to whom they are given, not their possessors; they belong to the community of believers, the community of believers does not belong to them; they place themselves at the service of that brotherhood, rather than make the brotherhood feel under obligation to serve them or do their bidding.

Childlike Trust—Toward Whom?

It is not that being childlike, having a sense of dependence, or looking to a superior source for direction, is discredited in the Scriptures. The key factor is: Toward *whom* is that childlike attitude directed? In answering a question of his disciples, Jesus

11 Compare Galatians 2:6; 6:3.
12 1 Corinthians 4:7, 8, 10, *JB*.
13 1 Corinthians 3:21-23, *NIV*.

called a little child to him and placed him before his disciples, saying:

> I tell you solemnly, unless you change and become like little children you will never enter into the kingdom of heaven. And so, the one who makes himself as little as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Anyone who welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But anyone who is an obstacle to bring down one of these little ones who have faith in me would be better drowned in the depths of the sea with a great millstone around his neck. . . . Obstacles indeed there must be, but alas for the man who provides them![14]

Note, please, that the childlike trust and faith was to be, not in men or in a religious system, but in Christ—"faith in ***me***." And faith in him is also faith in his Father, of whom we, too, become children. Nowhere in all the Scriptures are we instructed or encouraged to place our faith in men. True, we find in the Scriptures occasions where certain of the apostles used the expressions "children," "little children," "my children" in writing to others, or spoke of themselves in the relationship of father to children. The evidence shows, however, that this was done either as expressing a personal relationship due to the apostle's having been the first one to introduce the good news, the message of life, to those persons, as was the relationship between Paul and those in Corinth, Galatia, Thessalonica, or as a term of endearment used by an aged teacher toward those younger in the faith than he, as in the case of the apostle John.[15] They manifested fatherly *concern*, not the authoritative control of a father. They were careful not to go beyond this restricted, personal sense, and so were not guilty of leading persons to violate Christ's command: "Do not call anyone your father on earth, for one is your Father, the heavenly One."[16] Our trust or our confidence in men who render, or claim to render, spiritual service can never be absolute but always contingent on the extent to which they faithfully reflect the will and wisdom of our heavenly Lifegiver. If that trust or confidence ever reaches the point of faith in such men, it has gone too far.

Nor should we allow our personal responsibility as Christians to be invaded or taken over by an attempt to exercise spiritual "parenthood" in another way, by the ingenious sidestepping of Christ's

14 Matthew 18:1-7, *JB*.
15 1 Corinthians 4:14; 2 Corinthians 6:13; Galatians 4:19; 1 Thessalonians 2:7-11; 1 John 2:1.
16 Matthew 23:9.

injunction through claiming, not to be our spiritual Father, but to hold the place of a spiritual "Mother." A father passes life to children through a mother; she is thus a co-source of life to the children. God has nowhere assigned that role to any human arrangement, to no organization of any kind. His Son alone is the Mediator between God and men and he alone is "the way, the truth and the life," since no one comes to the Father except through him.[17] For any organization to claim that the gaining of everlasting life is contingent on recognition of itself is a negation of that truth and a usurpation of the role of Christ.

In the absence of the father, the mother of a family may be the source of direction to the children, even exercise matriarchal authority toward the family. We have already seen (in Chapter 4) that the Watch Tower organization, while arguing for the existence of a *heavenly*, "mother," termed "God's universal organization," claims to act for that "mother" as an earthly "channel" in dispensing her instructions and feeding her "children." In reality, the claims made regarding the "heavenly mother" and the respect and deference owed "her" all find their practical application in the earthly organization which becomes a form of surrogate mother.[18]

SHOW RESPECT *for* JEHOVAH'S ORGANIZATION

"My son, keep your father's commandment, and forsake not your mother's teaching. For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light, and the reproofs of discipline are the way of life."—Prov. 6:20, 23, RS.

THE children of Christendom are children of this system of things, for Christendom is a dominant part of it. Christendom's children have a lamp, the Bible, in hundreds of millions of copies in many languages; but to them it is as an unlighted lamp. Why? Because the father of this system of things and his slovenly offspring "Christendom" have blinded their minds to the light of the lamp. Worse than that, they have deliberately thrust their children out without due appreciation for their lamp and have allowed them to wander about in a bedarkened and almost destitute condition. Even the lamp that they carry, veiled as it is to them, would have been wrested away from them if a more powerful hand had not prevented it. That is the

1 Who are Christendom's children, and what is their condition?

17 1 Timothy 2:5, 6; John 14:6.

18 A "Question from Readers" in the October 15, 1985 *Watchtower* (pages 30, 31) says that "The anointed remnant on earth are not literally a part of 'Jerusalem above.' But because of their unique position as spiritual sons with the prospect of heavenly life, and because they represent God's heavenly 'wife,' at times Jehovah includes them in a reflective way in directives, prophecies, promises, and words of comfort addressed to his wifely organization in heaven."

I recall how, during the period of considerable turmoil at the international headquarters in 1980, an acquaintance of mine talked by phone with a traveling overseer (circuit overseer) in the midwest of the country and mentioned his feeling of concern about organizational actions taken. The traveling overseer's response was, "Well, we know this: Mama may be right, and mama may be wrong. *But she's still mama*." "Mama" to him was the headquarters organization centered in Brooklyn, not some heavenly body. And that is the reality as to the viewpoint among most of Jehovah's Witnesses. A similar view is fostered in some other religions to enhance their authority. But it is a concept that is foreign to Christian teaching. It effectually undermines the force of the truth that, whereas God in the past spoke to men by various means, including angelic messengers from the heavenly sphere, He has now spoken to us through his Son, and He continues to guide us by that Son and through the direction of his holy Spirit.[19] Nowhere in Scripture are we urged to look to a "heavenly organization" and its "earthly channel" as our source of enlightenment, but consistently we are directed to turn to our heavenly Father and his Son for help in understanding and applying the message they have given to mankind.[20]

In ancient times children were often put under the charge of a "tutor" who, different from those called "tutors" today, did not teach the child but led him to his teacher or school, as well as administering needed discipline.[21] Using this as an illustration, Paul writes:

> Before the coming of this faith, we were all imprisoned under the power of the Law, with our only hope of deliverance the faith that was to be shown to us. The Law was like a strict tutor in charge of us until we went to the school of Christ and learned to be justified by faith in him. <u>Once we have that faith we are completely free</u>

19 Hebrews 1:1, 2.

20 The text at Galatians 4:21-31 is employed to support claims for the concept of direction by a heavenly mother through a visible earthly organization. The account speaks of two women, Sarah and Hagar, and employs them symbolically. But the writer, Paul, says not that these represent "two organizations," but that they typify "two *covenants*." The issue he was discussing was that of no longer "being under law." (verse 21) He discusses covenant relationship with God, first that of the old covenant, given at Sinai, which he represents by Hagar, a slave woman, and then the new covenant, proceeding from heaven, and which he represents by Sarah, the free woman. He describes children of one covenant and children of the other covenant, showing that through the new covenant, and through it only, persons gain reconciliation with God and hence life as his sons, "children of the *promise*" (verse 28, *PME*), not "children of an organization." The whole concept of "organization" is absent from the account. The discussion is about covenants. Why, then, should we not put the emphasis where the inspired apostle puts it?

21 See *Aid to Bible Understanding*, pages 1620, 1621, or the corresponding material in *Insight on the Scriptures*, Vol. II, pages 1134, 1135, or other Bible dictionaries.

> from the tutor's authority. For now that you have faith in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God.[22]

To allow ourselves now to be under subjection to some earthly system and its laws, permitting these to define and regulate our worship and our conduct toward God, is to turn back the clock to the time before Christ's coming. It would, in effect, nullify what Christ accomplished, nullify the freedom his act brought us. We would revert to the childlike circumstance that makes one little better than a slave, even as the apostle depicts the matter in saying:

> This is what I mean: so long as the heir is a minor, he is not better off than a slave, even though the whole estate is his; he is under guardians and trustees until the date fixed by his father. And so it was with us. During our minority we were slaves to the elementary ideas belonging to this world, but when the term was completed, God sent his own Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to purchase freedom for the subjects of the law, in order that we might attain the status of sons.[23]

Christ Jesus established a congregation on the foundation of his apostles, yet we are never exhorted to look to that congregation as our head. "The head of *every man* is," not the congregation or those forming it or those acting as shepherds in it, but, "Christ."[24] That means accepting him as the divinely appointed source of direction in our lives, the one to whom we look, by means of holy Spirit, for sure guidance in the decisions and choices we make in the path we walk. Any exhortations as to expressing respect, trust, or submissiveness to men within Christ's body of believers—whoever they might be—must therefore be seen as always relative, never absolute. If Christ is indeed our Head, we must conscientiously weigh all direction, counsel and exhortation from any human source against his words and teachings, his example and the qualities he manifested. To accept without discrimination would not only be childishly foolish, it would be dangerous.[25] It would also be a negation of his headship. Blind obedience or submission to religious leaders is no sign of faith in Christ, is no evidence of depth of devotion or of respect for his divine position. Acceptance of Christ's headship carries with it the responsibility to discern what genuinely represents and proceeds from that headship and what

22 Galatians 3:23-26, *PME*
23 Galatians 4:1-5, *NEB*, marginal rendering.
24 1 Corintians 11:3.
25 Compare Galatians 1:6-8; 3:1-3; 5:7-9; 1 John 4:1.

does not. And we cannot pass that responsibility on to someone else; we must bear it ourselves.[26]

The call to freedom is implicit in God's Word. Why then do so many hesitate or fail to seek it?

Fear of Freedom

To fear is to expect punishment, and anyone who is afraid is still imperfect in love.—1 John 4:18, *Jerusalem Bible.*

Christian freedom, as has been noted, is not simply a negative freedom—the freedom *not* to believe, *not* to do—but primarily a positive freedom, the freedom to *believe*, to *do*, to *be*.

Though it may seem strange, many find such positive freedom, or just the prospect of it, frightening. For that freedom means taking on responsibility to come to conclusions based on understanding and convictions personally arrived at in one's own mind and heart, not in someone else's mind and heart or founded on others' interpretations and reasonings; the responsibility to make personal choices and decisions and to accept their consequences. For that precise reason a very large part of humanity seeks to *escape* from freedom. The means of escape all too often is by submission to a source that assumes authority to make decisions for the person, be his conscience, direct him in his life choices. Were it not for this willingness to exchange freedom for such submission, the totalitarian forms of government that emerged after World War I could never have gained the power they did. Of those forces, and the incredible attraction they exerted on the masses, German-born sociologist Erich Fromm writes:

> . . . the essence of these new systems, which effectively took control of man's entire social and personal life, was the submission of all but a handful of men to an authority over which they had no control. . . . [Millions] were as eager to surrender their freedom as their fathers were to fight for it.[27]

Showing how pervasive this human tendency is, and an underlying reason for it, another source states:

> Whenever we seek to avoid the responsibility for our own behavior, we do so by attempting to give that responsibility to some other individual or organization or entity. But this means we then give away our power to that entity, be it "fate" or "society" or the government or the corporation or our

26 2 Corinthians 13:5; Ephesians 4:14, 15; Galatians 6:4, 5; 1 Thessalonians 5:21, 22.
27 *Escape from Freedom*, Erich Fromm, Avon Books (1965 edition), page 18.

> boss. . . . In attempting to avoid the pain of responsibility, millions and even billions daily attempt to escape from freedom.[28]

In religion, as in other fields, many find it easier to let others think for them, choose for them, make their decisions for them. They doubtless would not be so willing to do this in material matters, but will do it in spiritual and ethical matters. Their faith is a "borrowed faith." They believe largely because others have believed and they accept their confident claims of being right. They seek security in belonging, through organizational membership. They seek refuge from moral problems through submission to a system which offers to take on the responsibility of directing their lives for them, deciding matters of conscience for them. The apostle addressed persons in Galatia as "you who *want to be* subject to law."[29] Similarly today many *want* to have things "spelled out for them," laid out for them in the form of rules so that they can feel free of the responsibility of decision. In the words of the writer of Hebrews, they simply 'have not grown up' as Christians.[30]

One of the basic truths of life is that life itself is difficult. In many respects, this is because confronting problems and working for their solution is a painful process. No one's life is free from problems, and the pain they cause emotionally may surpass physical pain. The tendency is to attempt to avoid the pain by ignoring the problems, refusing to confront them, or seeking escape from them by whatever means we can. Persons experienced in mental health care recognize that this is not only common but even harmful. As the source last quoted expresses it:

> The tendency to avoid problems and the emotional suffering inherent in them is the primary basis of all human mental illness. . . . Some of us will go to quite extraordinary lengths to avoid our problems and the suffering they cause, proceeding far afield from all that is clearly good and sensible in order to try to find an easy way out, building the most elaborate fantasies in which to live, sometimes to the total exclusion of reality. In the succinctly elegant words of Carl Jung, "Neurosis is always a substitute for legitimate suffering." [31]

The mental "food" supplied by the Watch Tower organization does not only encourage the shifting of personal responsibility to a system and its leaders. As we have seen, it also nourishes an il-

28 Psychiatrist Dr. M. Scott Peck, in *The Road Less Traveled* (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1978), page 42.
29 Galatians 4:21, *AT*.
30 Hebrews 5:12-14.
31 *The Road Less Traveled*, page 17.

lusionary viewpoint of life, stimulating a willingness to believe—despite any evidence to the contrary—that one is enjoying an ideal, virtually problem-free, spiritual environment, that one need only 'follow the organization's directions' and all will be well. Many, perhaps most, prefer to believe this. They find it easier to do so. Yet, in the end, the escape they seem to achieve proves more costly than the legitimate suffering avoided. For the illusion can be maintained only by lifelong, constant subjection to indoctrination and by a constant routine of acts that ease, temporarily, the sense of guilt otherwise conveyed by failure to meet organizational demands. It requires allowing one's mental faculties to be fettered, channeled, one's compassion and openness of heart to be circumscribed. The long-term losses ultimately prove more costly than the discipline and effort that would have been expended in facing up to reality and dealing with it.

In 1985, in a letter to me a man in New York state wrote:

> I too have been "in the Truth" for forty-eight years and have served with all my heart. Also, I have suffered all the indignities and imprisonments most of us Witnesses have that are of our age. Now to look at the organization we grew to love as uncaring and dispassionate is too traumatic. What bothers me even more is that I've known it for some time, but have harbored these sentiments privately. I do believe that fear to express my conscience has made me a lesser person than I was when I came "into the Truth." Because of that, I don't think I like myself. At least your book has forced me to come to grips with it. How vividly John brought to our attention that fear acts as a restraint and while fear is present we cannot exercise perfect love.—1 John 4:18.

I believe that what he says has, in greater or lesser measure, been true of all of us—that we were all *diminished* in one way or another—in our free use of the mental powers God gave us, in our free expression of love, compassion and mercy, in our being able to speak truth wherever needed and whatever the circumstance. Granted, not all are affected to the same extent. Some manage to retain a fair degree of personal integrity, to resist to some extent being pressured into a rigid mold. But I have no question in my own mind that, even so, all suffer loss, that they become, to use the expression of the writer just quoted, inevitably 'less of a person' than they might otherwise be—and less reflective of Christ than they could otherwise be. In the words of the apostle, a figurative veil remains for them, with a new legalism and its "written code" replacing the Law code. That veil "lies upon their hearts,"

clouds and dulls their vision of the splendor of their new standing before God made possible by his Son.[32] The fear to face up to the full meaning of that standing hinders their "freeness of speech," often leads to concealed feelings, veiled, cloaked expressions, rather than the openness, straightforwardness and candor characterizing Christian freedom. As the apostle states:

> Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.[33]

Some of the most serious losses resulting from this subjection to a system are of a subtle, gradual, cumulative kind. Others are not, and the effects of letting other people do one's thinking are more plainly evident.

I think of a woman in the eastern U.S. whose husband came from a family whose members were among the earliest associates of the Watch Tower organization in that area. He became a "congregation overseer" and was a "pillar" in the Witness community. In middle age, he suddenly died. He had steadily put trust in the organization's assurances of the nearness of the end and had not allowed material concerns to receive very serious importance. At his death, there remained essentially nothing with which his wife could support herself and, now in her fifties, she found herself obliged to seek employment virtually as a matter of survival. Because the work she obtained in a nursing home required wearing a uniform, and because her work hours were close to those of certain Kingdom Hall meetings, she wore the uniform to those meetings. She noted that, though raising her hand regularly to comment, for some reason she was no longer called on. On inquiry, she was informed by elders that it was because she was wearing the uniform (viewed as 'inappropriate dress'). Her long years of service and those of her husband, the difficulty she faced as a widow, seemed not to count.

I recently spoke by phone with a man who, as a youth, had an outstanding academic record. He turned down scholarship opportunities and, on leaving high school, became a pioneer and later served several years at the international headquarters. After leaving the headquarters, he became a circuit overseer and, later, a district overseer. He was married and in time children came. He soon

32 2 Corinthians 3:14-16.
33 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18, *NIV*.

found work with a national company and did well. Recently, however, personnel changes in management placed his job at risk. As he stated, now in his fifties, with no degree—which has become a near "must" with most companies in the field he knows—he realizes more seriously than ever before the consequences of placing implicit trust in a religious system and submitting to its pressures, of having worn blinders, as it were, to anything other than what it set before him.

I recall corresponding comments made to me while I was still on the Governing Body by a headquarters staff member, Ken Pulcifer, who had been a traveling overseer before becoming part of the headquarters organization. He came to my office one day, asked if I had a few minutes, and then expressed his concern about the young people in the organization. In essence, he said: 'We urge our young men to go pioneering or come to Bethel as soon as they finish high school. Many do. Later they get married and then comes a pregnancy. They leave the pioneer work or leave Bethel. They have to find work but they're not equipped for a good paying job and have to settle for whatever they can get. Along with the other expenses, there are hospital bills to pay. The difficult circumstances put severe stress on the marriage, which often is still in its adjustment period. Sometimes it proves destructive to the marriage.' He said he felt we were not doing right by the young people by discouraging them from genuinely preparing themselves to face life in today's world. I could only agree with him but I saw no realistic hope of altering the organizational viewpoint.

During a tour in connection with a series of Watch Tower conventions in the Orient in 1971, one of those on the tour was a very attractive woman my wife and I had met in Pittsburgh some years before. I noticed her now walking with a severe limp, and on inquiring of a friend was told that she had suffered from an illness affecting her hip. When I asked if some medical solution would not have been possible, the friend said that, yes, the doctors wanted to perform surgery but the woman put it off. On my asking why, the response was, "Well, you know—1975." Already her affected leg was inches shorter than the other. 1975 came and went, but her condition remained, now past solution.

These are but a sampling of thousands of similar cases. Even though the organization is currently advancing no specific date for the "final solution" to all problems, the continual assurance of perpetually being "at the very threshold of a new order," affects one's attitude toward solving problems, gives a distorted view of reality. Multiple accounts could be given of the effects of closing

one's eyes to reality in order to maintain belief in illusionary hopes. We normally view with repugnance persons who induce others of limited resources to invest in ventures based purely on speculative grounds and which result in devastating financial loss. But there are things even more important, more valuable, and certainly more irreplaceable than money. Our time—the hours, days, months and years it involves—is the "currency" of life itself. Those resources are limited. We would perhaps do well to realize that, even if we live to pass 80 years of age, at birth we only had a fund of about 30,000 days at our disposal At 40, half those 30,000 days are already spent; by the time we are 50, only 11,000 days are still in the fund; at 60, about 7,000 days, and our life "bank account" dwindles dramatically thereafter. Long ago, the psalmist wrote:

> Our years die away like a murmur. Seventy years is the span of our life, eighty if our strength holds; the hurrying years are labour and sorrow, so quickly they pass and are forgotten. . . . Teach us to order our days rightly, that we may enter the gate of wisdom.[34]

In view of the preciousness of time, how can we presume to impose on others our view as to how they should invest theirs, or seek to direct and control that investment? To the extent that we ourselves have benefited from the divine wisdom set forth in God's Word, we can encourage others, we can even counsel against fruitless investment and for sound investment.[35] But this is far different from urging, pressuring persons to invest only in those specified activities and interests which we personally promote, implying that they are foolishly wasteful if they do not.

By the same token, while we may be grateful for the thoughts, experience and relative wisdom of others, we can never afford to allow anyone to assume control of *our* time, in effect dictating the use of the limited funds of our life. We may have done this in the past, and the natural tendency is to resist acknowledging that in doing so we have made a poor investment. To recognize and admit to oneself that years, even decades, have been spent in pursuing an illusionary path is painful. The pain of even contemplating that possibility may be so strong that we prefer to refuse to consider it, to shut out the hard facts and continue on as we have been doing. But we cannot salvage the investment by "pouring good money after bad."

Again, the fear of freedom weighs heavily on many and the mere thought of not being linked to a particular organization leaves them

34 Psalm 90: 9, 10, 12, *NEB*.

35 1 Corinthians 7:29-31; Galatians 6:9, 10; Ephesians 5:15-17.

feeling weak. The mental health source referred to earlier presents this explanation as to why many hesitate to free themselves:

> One of the roots of this "sense of impotence" in the majority of patients is some desire to partially or totally escape the pain of freedom, and, therefore, some failure, partial or total, to accept responsibility for their problems and their lives. They feel impotent because they have, in fact, given their power away. Sooner or later, if they are to be healed, they must learn that the entirety of one's adult life is a series of personal choices, decisions. If they can accept this totally, then they become free people. To the extent that they do not accept this they will forever feel themselves victims.[36]

Other Fears Inhibiting Spiritual Growth

I was privileged once to be present at the conclusion of a birthing. When the umbilical cord was cut and the baby was placed on the mother's stomach, she said: "Well, little fellow, you're on your own now!" It was the start of a new life—the life of a unique individual—and I still recall the thrill I experienced on hearing her words to the infant. The being "on your own" that birth brings, however, does not initially extend very far. The umbilical cord has been cut, but in infancy one is still crucially, helplessly dependent on the care of others. A baby, or even a small child, has an inborn fear of being left alone, an inner sense of vulnerability. As an infant, to be left alone for very long is to die.

The process of growing up, of maturing, is one of learning to cope with the concept of independence, of gradually preparing to assume full responsibility for oneself as a person. It is not an easy process, as any parent who has sought to guide a child through it well knows. Adolescence is the time in which a young boy or young girl nears the crossover point from dependency to independency, and it can be a painful, troubling, often confusing, time for the child. The success of that transition, or lack of it, has enduring effects on the way we live our lives thereafter. The same is true in our spiritual growth.

In both emotional and spiritual growth, as also our acceptance of the responsibility that freedom brings, hindering factors may include fear of aloneness, a sense of insecurity and impotence. Though no longer small children, we still feel an innate need of others, and not without reason. Even as adults, we generally depend on others for many things in life—providing protection

36 *The Road Less Traveled*, pages 43, 44.

against a variety of dangers, growing the food we need or making it accessible to us, caring for us in time of illness or of old age, and the filling of many other needs. Along with growth, there also comes the eventual awareness of our own smallness and comparative insignificance when compared with the world in which we live. A sense of aloneness, of isolation, can therefore produce feelings of insecurity, vulnerability, powerlessness and uncertainty, and can create a compulsion to escape from these feelings by submerging ourselves in something larger. Some persons have no sense of personal identity, no sense of security, no sense of strength—not even a sense of meaning to their lives—apart from their belonging to some structuralized system, submitting to the external authority the system represents. They will even calm any feelings of doubt and uncertainty that may subsequently arise by simply increasing their submission and, in effect, forcing their minds to accept claims of certainty made by the system. Because one suppresses or shuts out the *awareness* of the problems, it is as if these did not exist. What results is more of a numbing of one's feelings than of genuine relief, an anodyne rather than a healing.

Christian freedom does not promote isolation. But neither does it move us to seek refuge from isolation by the sacrifice of our individuality and personal integrity to some system or organization in exchange for a mere sense of "belonging." It calls instead for relationships with others motivated by love and with spontaneous expressions thereof in acts of useful and productive cooperation.

When one has been submerged in an organization of any size, the thought of disengagement can be disturbing. Having lived in a closed society, with its ties giving a sense of security and the feeling of belonging, the person now faces the challenge of life outside that closed society. That prospect may bring a renewal of anxiety and feelings of impotence. Organizations often play on those feelings, causing the person to feel that leaving their confines will mean being essentially alone and weak in a hostile world. "If you leave, where will you go?" is the question commonly asked among Jehovah's Witnesses.

I think we might help clear our thinking if we considered conditions that prevailed in the early centuries and the problem Christians then confronted. Men were already fulfilling the apostle's warning about those who would seek to get the disciples to be followers of themselves.[37] Persons were being threatened with expulsion from the congregation if they did not conform to the poli-

37 Acts 20:29, 30.

cies of men like Diotrophes.[38] Jesus' messages to seven congregations found in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation reveal clearly that the world field had, as foretold, been "oversown" with weeds among the wheat.[39] His messages exposed deviations from faith, love and truth that urgently needed correction or else would result in a withdrawal of his favor and support.

What would a person in, let us say, the third century A.D. do if he felt that matters had reached the point in his area where Christ's headship had been seriously usurped by men, where the conformity called for could be attained only at the sacrifice of conscience, where he felt that Christian truth and spirit and love were being subtly perverted, so much so that there was a discrediting of Christianity? He might live in one of those places where the apostle Paul had personally labored, such as Ephesus or Thessalonica. Any expression of contemplated withdrawal might well be met by others with statements such as, "How could you possibly withdraw? Don't you realize that Paul, Christ's own apostle, personally brought the good news to this area, started the Christian gathering that continues to this day? Surely if anything is amiss, Christ will correct it and we must just wait on Him until he does so. Where did you learn what you have learned—was it not through and in this gathering? If you withdrew, where would you go? Outside there are only heretics and heathen. Where would you find another gathering the size of this one? You would be in danger of finding yourself all alone or just part of some tiny splinter group."

What would have been the result had that third-century person been overcome by such argumentation, had suppressed his conscientious feelings, closed his eyes to the serious wrongs, and wishfully believed that these would change, despite all contrary evidence? Would a course of passive conformity give any assurance against the possibility of his being found among those to whom Christ would say, as he said to persons in Laodicea, "You are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were one or the other, but since you are neither, but only lukewarm, I will spit you out of my mouth"?[40] The course on which many professed Christian leaders had then embarked *did not change*; it continued on until a hierarchical system developed. Had the third-century person described taken the course of passive conformity and encouraged his children and

38 3 John 9, 10.
39 Matthew 13:25, 38, 39.
40 Revelation 3:15, 16, *JB*.

grandchildren to do the same, they would all ultimately have become submissive subjects of that hierarchical system. Had we lived then, would we have found that consequence acceptable? Only if our answer is affirmative could we find acceptable and persuasive the argumentation which encourages passive conformity today.

Surely persons in those times had need of faith in the promise that, "If anyone loves me he will keep my word, and my Father will love him and we shall come to him and make our home with him."[41] The need for faith is no less today than in past times. With faith, we may face circumstances like that of the beleaguered David and with him say to God:

> Cast me not off, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. When my own father and my mother forsake me, then Jehovah will take me up.[42]

Examining Our Motivation

Truth presents a test to us and we only harm ourselves if we run from it, hide from it, close our eyes to it. It tests our faith. How much confidence do we have in God and in his power to sustain and uphold us? Self-examination can be painful, but it is necessary. The apostle writes:

> Examine yourselves: are you living the life of faith? Put yourselves to the test. Surely you recognize that Jesus Christ is among you?—unless of course you prove unequal to the test.[43]

I have no desire to pressure anyone to take a particular course toward any religion with which he may be affiliated. I have corresponded with hundreds of persons still associated with the Watch Tower organization, some of them even serving as elders. Not one could say that I ever expressed any disrespect for their position or in any way sought to induce them to disaffiliate themselves. I believe that step, if taken, should be based on a completely personal decision. The consequences in many cases are serious enough to make clear that only the person involved should bear the responsibility for such a step. The presence of error alone does not automatically make disengagement a moral obligation. I do not personally believe there is any religious system that is completely error-free. Something other than merely a number of erroneous teachings produced the decisions I made that led to my ceasing to

41 John 14:23, *JB*.
42 Psalm 27:9, 10, *ASV*; see also John 10:28, 29.
43 2 Corinthians 13:5, *NEB*.

be part of the Witness religion. Many who remain do so, not because they are satisfied as to the rightness of the full body of teachings, but because they see, or believe they see, "nothing better elsewhere." Which, of course, is true of people who belong to many of the non-Witness religions. I am aware that not all persons affiliated with a religion feel that they have given over their freedom to their religious denomination and that they therefore need to become free from it in order to have freedom in Christ. Nevertheless, whatever our affiliation, personal scrutiny is advisable.

There are also persons who, though discerning the flaws in various teachings and in the emphasis and false importance given to organizational views, are nonetheless cautious in their speech and actions so as to avoid a break with the religion out of concern for family relationships. I know of some who have a parent who is in an advanced age and has been in the religion all his or her life. These persons feel that if they were to be excommunicated by the organization the shock might even be life-threatening to the parent, or cut that one off from the help and support they now personally give to him or her. Others exercise caution out of the conviction that an official rupture with the religion would certainly produce an equal rupture in their marriage due to their mate's being thoroughly indoctrinated. It would seem that endurance of certain restraints and unhappiness can be seen as a genuine sacrifice on their part, when motivated by concern for others. This can, obviously, have its limitations, and even family relationships cannot justify active support of teachings or policies one believes are misrepresentations of Christianity.[44]

But people who have gained a degree of success in the secular world may simply be reluctant to detach themselves from an organization that is fairly extensive, has organizational strength and numbers. They perhaps feel a desire to employ in a religious context the same secular abilities that gained them success in the world, or perhaps donate or loan funds and, as a result, experience a more intimate, privileged relationship with men in authority. I believe the Witness religion, along with some others, lends itself notably to those of such inclination. This was not so much the case in its early history but is so today. The organization's intense focus on works, on expansion, on big gatherings, big projects, provides an ambience in which those with secular administrative experience

44 Matthew 10:37.

and preferences can shine. In a larger religion they might be "small frogs in a large pond," as the saying goes. The Watch Tower organization is small enough for them to make an impact, gain prominence, and yet large enough that elevation therein can give them an added sense of personal importance. They may be men with insight, who are capable of seeing the flawed nature of the organizational teachings and policies, the variance between these and the teachings of Christ and of Scripture. They may even feel, perhaps cautiously express, their concern about this. Often they can say more than others, and express their thoughts to men in authority, such as members of the Governing Body, particularly if they are known to give strong financial support to the organization. I know men who have done this. In general they have experienced disappointment at seeing that their words often had little effect, did not receive the same kind of reception that their money gifts received. They doubtless recognize that if they withdrew their financial support the degree of intimacy they enjoy would fade, their expressions of concern could then actually place them at risk. However, finding no other religious system of comparable size and strength to which the might transfer to their satisfaction, they remain. They may not willingly, perhaps even consciously, recognize the source of the reluctance they feel. Their course, however, at least parallels the observation at John 12:42, 43:

> For all that, even among those in authority a number believed in him [Christ], but would not acknowledge him on account of the Pharisees, for fear of being banned from the synagogue. For they valued their reputation with men rather than the honour which comes from God.[45]

Though undoubtedly having held a preeminence equal to, or greater than, any of these, Saul of Tarsus was willing to lose his prominence in the system for which he had labored so forcefully, willing to leave a major religious affiliation of his people and to associate with persons whose sole "big" event was a baptism of thousands of believers at the start of their religious history, but with nothing comparable during the rest of their entire lifetime. They had no national or international assemblies, no building projects, in fact had no buildings of their own dedicated for religious purposes, engaged in no major productions, placed no emphasis on numerical factors, and had no centralized or extensive administrative

45 *New English Bible* rendering.

setup—as both Scripture and history testify.[46] In striking contrast to the course of many, Paul says:

> So now whom am I trying to please—man, or God? Would you say it is men's approval I am looking for? If I still wanted that, I should not be what I am—a servant of Christ.
>
> [When] God . . . called me through his grace and chose to reveal his Son in me . . . I did not stop to discuss this with any human being, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to see those who were already apostles before me, but I went off to Arabia at once and later went straight back to Damascus. Even when after three years I went up to Jerusalem to vist Cephas and stayed with him for fifteen days, I did not see any of the other apostles; I only saw James, the brother of the Lord, and I swear before God that what I have just written is the literal truth.[47]

He certainly never fell into the class of those of whom Jude writes, those "ready with flattery for other people when they see some advantage to it."[48] Yet such flattery and efforts to impress men in authority are remarkably common within the Witness organization, and concern for gaining or maintaining organizational favor and position is often obvious in the conduct of a considerable percentage of elders and traveling representatives. In large measure it is such concern for position that gives the organization the degree of power and control over them that it has. Because of it men will even enforce policies that they believe are wrong in order to retain organizational favor. They do this at the cost of their freedom and moral integrity.

These motivating factors are not restricted to men of secular success and ability. They often apply with equal force to those of far more humble background, even the underprivileged. The Watch Tower's organizational arrangement may allow these to achieve a marked elevation in social status by virtue of diligence in meeting organizational goals, zeal in the program of activity; the sheer force of the hours they report. All of this may pave the way to eventual eldership. They may now deliver lengthy talks before audiences of a hundred or more persons, whereas without the official position they hold they might find it difficult to get a dozen persons to listen to them for any period of time. Like those of more impressive background, these may feel hesitant to do anything or say anything that might jeopardize the status they now enjoy. Christianity should appeal to the humble, should give them a sense

46 Notably we find *numerical figures* used in connection with the number of Christians at certain times or places only in the book of Acts and these are always no more than estimates. Compare Acts 1:15; 2:41; 4:4; 19:7.

47 Galatians 1:10, 15-20, *JB*.

48 Jude verse 16, *JB*.

of worth—but its appeal should not be on the basis just described, nor should their sense of personal worth be measured by such man-made standards. If they think seriously on the matter, they must recognize that the apparent appreciation shown them is essentially for what they can give to the furtherance of organizational goals, not what they themselves are as spiritual persons. There is a big difference in this, yet many choose to ignore that difference for the apparent benefits received. This, too, is—not Christian freedom—but a form of self-induced bondage.

In any self-examination a major question, then, is whether we have been willing to face the reality, however painful, of our situation and make a conscious decision, one that is genuinely our own. Avoiding the decision is no solution. Former priest Charles Davis, referred to in an earlier chapter, makes an accurate analysis in saying:

> Happiness is not quiescence [inaction] gained by a narrowing of consciousness; it demands that a man accept the autonomy proper to him as a free person. . . . Just to follow what others do or say and wait passively upon events is to live a diminished personal existence.
>
> . . . To think with honesty he has to face doubts and questionings that go deep and affect fundamentals. . . . The temptation in this situation is just to drift—to renounce a deliberate, personal choice and allow oneself to be carried along by what others are thinking, doing and saying.

After stating that, while some simply *drift out* of their religion along with others who are leaving, many *remain* in their religion because of the same lack of self-determination and conscious decision, he adds:

> Continued submission to external authority is more comfortable than making personally a radical decision. . . . But the inability or refusal to be free eventually brings weariness of life, and it excludes genuine happiness. To endure the upheaval and discomfort of a rending but truly personal decision is in the long run better.
>
> I am not setting myself up as a model. . . . Nor do I think myself more courageous than other men. The question of courage never entered my mind until people wrote to me on that theme after I announced my decision. What dominated my thoughts at the time was the sheer necessity for me of a personal choice. I had to confront my doubts, ask myself what I did in truth believe, and then act in harmony with my genuine convictions, whatever the consequences. Had I let things slide, balked the issue and refused to act decisively, with the vague hope that all my difficulties would eventually resolve themselves, I should have destroyed my real self and lapsed by default into a diminished state.[49]

49 *A Question of Conscience*, pages 23, 24.

His experience and feelings parallel not only my own but those of many others I know.

Personal Relationship—the Key Factor

The key to facing the challenge of Christian freedom successfully is the recognition that our relationship with God and Christ is primarily a *personal* one. There must be a deep sense of personal responsibility toward the One who redeemed us from slavery to sin and death. As the apostle writes:

> You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.[50]

The price God's Son paid for us was his own life, poured out as he hung impaled, bearing "our sins in his body" that we might "die to sin and live to righteousness."[51] "The price was paid in precious blood."[52] That price was far too high for us to take lightly what we owe in gratitude and devotion to the One who paid it. By it, according to his Father's purpose and will, God's Son, and he alone, became our Master and we his servants. If the price paid has meaning to us, we cannot allow any man or any group of men to step in between us and the one we serve. No true servant of God would want to insert himself in that way. When Paul found that Christians in Corinth were having serious differences because of viewing men, himself included, in a wrong light, he said to them:

> What I mean are all these slogans that you have, like: "I am for Paul," "I am for Apollos," "I am for Cephas," "I am for Christ." Has Christ been parceled out? Was it Paul that was crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? I am thankful that I never baptized any of you after Crispus and Gaius so none of you can say he was baptized in my name.[53]

When men who profess to be followers of Christ place themselves as governors over others, call upon these to adhere loyally and scrupulously to whatever directives they may give, even include the concept of loyalty to an organization in the questions asked persons at baptism, so that the baptism is done, not only in the "name" or "authority" of God and Christ, but in the "name" of the organization they head—when men do this they need to be faced with the question Paul posed: *Were you crucified for us?*

50 1 Corinthians 7:23, *NEB*.
51 1 Peter 2:24, *RSV*.
52 1 Peter 1:19, *NEB*.
53 1 Corinthians 1:12-15, *JB*.

Have you paid the price of your own life blood and by it bought us so as to be entitled to such submission? If they cannot answer "Yes" to those questions—and they clearly cannot—then we cannot possibly accord them the virtually total submission they call for and still remain loyal to the one who *did* die for us. We cannot be the slave of two masters.[54]

Because God's Son introduced us into a personal relationship with himself and with his Father, the judgment of our faithfulness rests with no man or group of men. Our relationship with God's Son transcends all other relationships. Paul was conscious of that fact and let it guide him in all his actions. As we have seen, his concern was not for the approval of men. He could therefore say to Christians in Corinth:

> Not that it makes the slightest difference to me whether you, or indeed any human tribunal, find me worthy or not. I will not even pass judgment on myself. True, my conscience does not reproach me at all, but that does not prove that I am acquitted; the Lord alone is my judge. There must be no passing of premature judgment. Leave that until the Lord comes; he will light up all that is hidden in the dark and reveal the secret intentions of men's hearts. Then will be the time for each one to have whatever praise he deserves from God.[55]

To those who failed to realize the full impact of each individual's personal relationship with God and Christ, he wrote:

> Who are you to pass judgment on someone else's servant? Whether he stands or falls is his own Master's business; and stand he will, because his Master has power to enable him to stand.... We shall all stand before God's tribunal... each of us will have to answer for himself.[56]

At such time of judgment, we, like Paul, stand as individuals before God's tribunal—not as collective members of any religious denomination or organization. Not on whether we believed what others in a particular group believed, not on whether we did what others in that group did, not on whether we manifested group loyalty by following the directions of those who headed such group, but on what we are and do as individuals will our judgment be rendered. We answer, "each of us," for ourselves individually, and our only Advocate and Mediator with the Father is Christ—not some organizational leadership.[57]

That organizational affiliation cannot gain us a favorable judgment is also seen in that we are judged, not by our adherence to

54 Matthew 6:24.
55 1 Corinthians 4:3-5, *JB*.
56 Romans 14:4, 10, 12, *NEB*.
57 1 Timothy 2:5, 6; Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:25; 1 John 2:1, 2.

organizational rules and directives, but "by the law of freedom."[58] That law of freedom is the "royal law," the "supreme law," the "sovereign law," and it is the law of love.[59] We need to ask ourselves continually whether what we do, the very attitudes we take, are genuinely founded in love.

If we adopt a self-righteous attitude based on performance of specified activities, routinely carried out week-by-week, or view ourselves as superior to all those outside our particular religious community on the basis of certain things we abstain from, how can we feel we are different from the Pharisee of Jesus' parable in his self-confidence based on his regularity of performing acts set out in the Law?[60] Jesus did not condemn the man's acts nor deprecate his abstention from various wrongs. What he condemned was his underlying *attitude*, his self-approving spirit, and unloving viewpoint of others, which robbed his performance of any value. Because that attitude was typical of Pharisees, Jesus told his disciples that "unless your righteousness *exceeds* that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."[61] The scribes and Pharisees of that time are no longer with us, but the legalistic and exclusivistic attitude typifying them is, and it is incompatible with love of neighbor.

It is when we become free from an environment that induces and fosters such an attitude, free from a system that seeks to regulate and dominate and systematize our activities and service to God, while making us feel that our dutifully submitting to all this makes us something "special," superior to others not so doing—it is then that we are faced with the true challenge of Christianity. We are now free to let our heart and our personal faith motivate us. How deep does our love go? What does it move us to do? How far does our interest in others extend, our concern to be of benefit, help and service to them? To what extent has the life lived by God's Son touched our hearts, lifted us up, expanded our outlook, deepened our appreciation, extended our thinking? The apostle's prayer is:

> . . . that through faith Christ may dwell in your hearts in love. With deep roots and firm foundations, may you be strong to grasp, with all God's people, what is the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of Christ, and to know it, though it is beyond knowledge. So may you attain to fullness of being, the fullness of God himself.[62]

58 James 2:12, *JB*.
59 James 2:8, *NIV*, *JB* and *NEB* renderings.
60 Luke 18:9-14.
61 Matthew 5:20, *RSV*.
62 Ephesians 3:17-19, *NEB*

Whether we wish it or not, we all exercise influence, for good or for bad, upon others. Not just what we say and do in our daily life, but also the *spirit* in which we say and do things, the *way* in which we show what matters to us, what *values* guide us, what *concerns* and *goals* impel us—all this is a constant exercise of influence. If, as the writer of Ecclesiastes puts it, "one sinner can destroy much good," it is also true that one person with a right spirit can bring great benefit to those around him or her.[63] Though seemingly small, that influence can be like a pebble that drops in the water and produces rippling circles that continually widen out. Its immediate effects necessarily reach those nearest us—a mate, children, parents, relatives, friends. Both through them and through our contacts beyond our family circle and friendships, that influence extends outward and in ways we may not realize.

Our not being part of something "big," part of some religious movement that gives visible evidence of size and power, should not lessen our faith, nor make us feel too small, too weak to accomplish anything of genuine worth in our life. Having some visible, notable "impact" on the world scene is not the criterion for determining the value of one's faith or deeds of faith, even as it is not proof of a religion's belief system being right. Christian influence can be of a humble, modest nature, working quietly like the yeast in bread dough, yet accomplishing genuine good, though without fanfare and acclaim.[64] Again, our human nature may prefer that which manifests apparent power and strength from the human standpoint, but faith does not require that.

According to God's Son we serve as a light for people by our deeds, deeds that induce praise of our Father.[65] Those deeds must be, not the product of external pressures or the result of programming, but deeds that are the product of our own minds and hearts and that show that we have been enlightened by the good news, that it fills our lives, gives evidence of having changed our lives. Mere talking during certain periods in a programmed "preaching work," using prescribed subjects and expressions set out for us in religious publications, cannot begin to fulfill this commission. As Jesus' disciple John expressed it, "love must not be a matter of

63 Ecclesiastes 9:18.
64 Luke 13:20, 21.
65 Matthew 5:14-16. The Greek term *erga* is rendered as "works" in some translations, "deeds" in others, but in neither case does it convey the idea of participation in some kind of "organized" activity, both the preceding and the succeeding context showing instead that Jesus was speaking of what those listening to him would do in their daily life and in their everyday dealings with others.

words or talk; it must be genuine, and show itself in action."[66] Only through reflecting the enlightening effect of the good news by what we are and do throughout our lives, every day and all day long, can we be as a light to the world.

Coping with Uncertainty

Our human tendency is to want to resolve all questions of belief, to free ourselves from any uncertainty. What is "the truth"? Exactly what do we believe? Because we would like to escape from the pain that uncertainty carries with it, most of us would be happy if there were someone to tell us this, relieve us from having to wrestle with issues ourselves, lay out a precise path for us. An organization that claims to have the answers to all questions attracts many. As mature persons we need to recognize that no human has all those answers, nor need the lack of them hinder our spiritual growth. As the author of *The Road Less Traveled* perceptively states:

> There are many who, by virtue of their passivity, dependency, fear and laziness, seek to be shown every inch of the way and have it demonstrated to them that each step will be safe and worth their while. This cannot be done. For the journey of spiritual growth requires courage and initiative and independence of thought and action.[67]

Christianity does represent a journey, one that carries on all through our life. It is unrealistic to think that it can be made completely free from questions or any uncertainty. Yet the *goal*, and the assurance that we are heading toward that goal, need never be in doubt. Abraham is called the "father" of all those sharing a faith like his.[68] When in Mesopotamia, he lived among people of long acquaintance, in familiar surroundings, where life followed a basic pattern, all of which helped minimize questions and uncertainty. But then came God's call to leave his country and people and go to a strange land and live among people previously unknown.[69] From that point forward Abraham faced many questions and uncertainties and some of these were not fully answered in his lifetime. Yet what is written of him with regard to the birth of his son Isaac is true of his whole life:

> No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.[70]

66 1 John 3:18, *NEB* ; here "action" translates the Greek *ergon*, singular of *erga*.67 Pages 310, 311.
68 Romans 4:16.
69 Hebrews 11:9-11.
70 Romans 4:20, 21, *NRSV*.

We are given Abraham as our example and we are called on to make a similar journey, stepping out in faith, trusting in God for his guidance as each need develops, not fearing whatever pain the uncertainties some parts of our journey may entail. Our human nature might prefer it otherwise and we can decide to simply "settle down," adopt some pre-decided, prepackaged set of beliefs, and relax from the effort of forward movement. Most professed Christians seem to have made this choice, preferring to feel "comfortable" in their religion and its apparent—and convenient—supplying of their needs, rather than exert themselves toward growth in knowledge, understanding, and in ability to cope with problems. But it is such personal exertion that contributes measurably to strength in faith and love. One may not realize, even as I did not realize, that intense activity of itself is no guarantee against stagnation—not if it is all restricted to the confines of a "closed system." While providing much exercise, all the intense activity spent on a treadmill in the end leaves one just where he started. Awareness of the reality of one's situation may only come when one genuinely begins to *move*, to continue *forward* in the Christian journey, and then for perhaps the first time a person may realize the hobbling, limiting nature of his religious affiliation, realize to what extent *inertia* and *inanition* actually characterized and defined his religious life.

Reflecting a similar tendency, upon disengaging from a system that offered claimed certainty and upon being freed from its imposition of beliefs, one may now feel a desire to settle all Biblical questions quickly, to replace each rejected belief with a new one, the "right" one. But haste in any area is unwise, more often than not it leads to error, a heading off on a tangent. Old errors may simply be replaced by new ones and when this is realized, there must be a retracing of steps with valuable time actually lost rather than gained. It is not speed but steadiness and heart determination that are needed. Self-control, a fruitage of having God's Spirit, can enable us to exercise patience, calmness and endurance in our journey of faith, realizing that these qualities will do more to gain us progress in understanding and wisdom than haste ever could.

The False Freedom of Self-centeredness

Christian freedom releases us from the futility of law-keeping as a means of pleasing God or as the way to give meaning and validity to life, a sense of personal worth and fulfillment. It no less frees us

from the enslavement that comes with a *self-seeking* life. In urging fellow believers to defend their freedom, the apostle said their life should be one of "faith expressing itself through love." Christian freedom is founded in love, preserved by love, cannot exist without love, and "love is not self-seeking," not selfish.[71] Love must express itself toward others; it withers and shrivels without that expression. When we interest ourselves voluntarily in others, reach out to them, seek to benefit them (whether or not we are in turn benefited by them), the extent and scope of our freedom does not contract. It expands to its *greatest dimensions*, its full potential. In an imperfect world, it takes faith to believe and act on this. Those who free themselves from some form of religious enslavement simply to lay hold of an existence spent in daily pleasing themselves have only passed from one form of enslavement to another. To fail to use freedom to express love and faith is to lead a narrow life, to suffer a form of "tunnel vision" that can see, not a broad horizon, but only our own interests, pursuits and aspirations. It leaves us subject to inner and external forces that subtly dominate and slowly constrict both our personality and its potential. Rather than enhancing life, ultimately our self-pleasing only deprives and empties our life of its genuine worth and meaning.

Having embraced Christian freedom, we are happily not locked into a rigid system that dictates specific rules as to how our love may express itself. Our expression of it is a fruitage of God's Spirit and can be given freely and spontaneously, for "there is no law dealing with such things as these."[72]

The Elusive Quality of Balance

> *Keep your head in all situations. Keep your mind sane and balanced. Always be steady.*—2 Timothy 4:5, *NIV, PME,* and *RSV* renderings respectively.

Balance indicates mental and emotional steadiness, calmness, the ability to resist pressures that sway, to avoid extremes both in thought and conduct. The word "balance" rarely appears in Bible translations.[73] But it is implicit in the many Scriptural exhortations toward understanding, insight, perceptiveness, for it is a product of those qualities.

71 Galatians 5:6, *NIV*; 1 Corinthians 13:4.
72 Galatians 5:24, *NEB*; compare 2 Corinthians 1:23, 24.
73 The Greek term (*nepho*) rendered "steady" or "sane and balanced" at 2 Timothy 4:5 literally relates to sobriety in place of intoxication, but figuratively carries the sense of what is "the opposite of every kind of fuzziness. Sober judgment is highly valued in both individual and public life." (*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Abridged Edition, pages 633, 634.)

I believe it is best exemplified for us in the life of God's Son, in what he said, did and, above all, what he was as a person. His apostles reflect the influence of the balance they saw in, and learned from, their Master.

As discussed earlier, so much of life involves a matter of degree. What is it that changes a proper attitude toward food into gluttony, or a proper attitude toward money, and the earning thereof by work, into greed? It is the *degree* to which we focus our attention on such things. Obviously, it is much easier to see extremes, as between laziness and being a workaholic, or between a teetotaler and a drunkard. Yet, while it is difficult to draw the precise dividing line between the extremes and the particular point at which each begins, there is a reasonably broad area in between. Balance involves steering a course in all aspects of life that avoids both extremes; it involves sensing when one is passing over an invisible dividing line, in either direction.

That quality seems sorely needed if we are to have a healthful view of Christian freedom and its exercise, and if it is to bring us to the goal of life everlasting we hope for. Particularly when having spent years in a religious system which is very absolutist—claiming to possess absolute truth on all important matters of belief and life—and thereafter separating from such system, one may feel not only uncertainty but also a sense of lacking stability and direction. It is easy to go from the extreme of believing that you have "the Truth" on everything, to feeling you have the truth on nothing, from almost automatically accepting everything taught you, to becoming critical of everything, doubting everything you have believed—almost a form of intellectual paranoia.

We are free to read what we will. But if we do not apply our powers of critical judgment in what we now read, we may simply fall prey to the same kinds of flawed argumentation that led us into error in the past. The things argued for may be very different, even opposite, but if the argument is flawed with mere assertion, unproved hypotheses, an appeal based solely on plausibility, slanted use of evidence, intellectual intimidation and the tyranny of authority (including scholastic or academic authority), it may simply conduct us from one mental enslavement to another, from being disciples of one set of men to being disciples of another set of men. I have been impressed to see among former Witnesses some clearly intelligent persons who were able to discern error and misrepresentation in Watch Tower publications but who cannot seem to discern essentially the same *form* of error and misrepresentation in material they now read. In some cases it has caused them themselves to develop argumentation that is every bit as slanted and biased as anything published by the Watch Tower.

Similarly, there may be the tendency to go to extremes in the exercise of freedom by converting it into mere irresponsibility or licentiousness. In the first century, Paul labored among people who often fell into two extreme camps—some advocating the narrowness and ridigity of legalism, others using Christian freedom as an excuse for lawlessness, replacing the harshness of legalism with the insipidity of a standardless, anything-goes outlook. It took spiritual balance to avoid those extremes then and it does now.

Some who withdraw from an authoritarian religion—and there are a number of such religions—react like youths who have become free from parental control and who promptly proceed to do all the things they could not do during their dependence. Persons who exit from such religious systems may thereafter flaunt their freedom and independence by promptly engaging in any conduct or practices the religion prohibited, even though the practice itself, while not specifically condemned in Scripture, may nonetheless have negative aspects to it. There is no merit in that course; it betrays a childishness, a failure to realize that freedom must be responsibly exercised or it will only lead to some new enslavement or addiction.[74]

Disenchantment with a very doctrinaire religion may create the attitude that doctrine itself is to be viewed negatively or as of minimal importance, that only love counts. Knowledge, reading and meditation on the Scriptures are, at least to some extent, depreciated. This may be because "**doctrine**" in the minds of many conveys the idea of official dogma, perhaps of a fairly involved or complex interpretative nature, whereas the term itself has the basic sense of "teaching." In the Scriptures, it involves not simply teachings related to *beliefs* or *concepts*, but teachings about *conduct*, one's *way of life*.[75] To "love your neighbor as yourself" is itself a doctrine or teaching of God's Son.

One can also go in the other direction and emphasize doctrine to the depreciation of love's importance. To do this is to fail to realize that doctrine or teaching is a means to an end, not the end in itself. Jesus' statement that the whole thrust of all the Hebrew Scriptures was to inculcate and promote love of God and love of neighbor would seem to justify the belief that this is also the ultimate end in view of all Christian doctrine or teaching.[76] Jesus'

74 Compare 2 Peter 2:17-20.

75 The terms "doctrine" and "teaching" often become interchangeable between one translation and another. After describing wrong conduct—including murder, lying, perjury, immorality, sodomy—the apostle speaks of this as "contrary to sound *doctrine* [Greek, *didaskalía*]" (*RSV*; *NIV*) or, in other translations, as behavior that "flouts the wholesome *teaching*" (*NEB*; *PME*) of the good news. (1 Timothy 1:8-11; compare 1 Timothy 4:1-6.)

76 Matthew 22:35-40.

teachings about the way of life we should live, our attitude toward, and our dealings with, our fellow man, are all "wholesome doctrine," though they are not what many commonly think of as "doctrine."

Knowledge can be, should be, of great value. Teaching aims at increasing and expanding our knowledge. But knowledge, too, is not an end in itself. The Scriptures are described as "useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, *equipped for every good work*."[77] Knowledge can greatly increase our ability to benefit, not only ourselves, but others. And it is the *use* made of knowledge that determines the value of possessing it. As the apostle puts it:

> If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.[78]

Of some who misused their knowledge, he stated:

> "We all have knowledge"; yes, that is so, but knowledge gives self-importance—it is love that makes the building grow. A man may imagine that he understands something, but still not understand anything in the way that he ought to. But any man who loves God is known by him.[79]

He warned that the misuse of *knowledge* could even have a *destructive* effect on those who are weak.[80] In the fourteenth chapter of his letter to the Romans, the apostle discussed variant beliefs among Christians there, differing beliefs about foods and sacred days that were causing some to judge their brothers. Obviously, in such disputes, either one side was right and the other wrong, or both were wrong. Yet Paul showed that God had "welcomed" both those on the one side and those on the other side and that they were *His* servants to judge, and that He could maintain their favorable relationship with Him despite their varying scruples and views. What each was doing, whether partaking or abstaining, observing or not observing, he or she was doing as unto God and thus such issues did not provide basis for a critical, judgmental attitude on either side.[81] Other scriptures indicate that one side

77 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.
78 1 Corinthians 13:2, 3, *NRSV*.
79 1 Corinthians 8:1-3, *JB*.
80 1 Corinthians 8:10, 11.
81 Romans 14:1-12.

actually *was* right and the other wrong in their understanding.[82] Yet the apostle's urging was not that they keep arguing the matter out until the mistaken side acknowledged error. Rather he urged:

> Let us therefore no longer pass judgment on one another, but resolve instead never to put a stumbling block or hindrance in the way of another. . . . For the kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.[83]

Some issues *are* crucial because of the *effect* they have. The same apostle fought tenaciously against, not those who still felt moved by conscience to observe certain features of the Law, but those who sought to *impose* lawkeeping on others as essential for salvation, knowing how destructive this would be of Christian freedom, how it would essentially nullify the effect of Christ's sacrifice.[84] He fought, not simply against that which was *mistaken*, but against that which was *harmful, damaging, enslaving*. In understanding scriptures, rightness and wrongness are always important, since they determine the degree of benefit we gain from our understanding. But that importance is always relative and in some cases simply not worthy of dispute, certainly not of division. Merely proving, by argument, something to be right or wrong does not of itself accomplish what Christianity is all about. We need to seek, then, not merely knowledge, but wisdom, insight, sound judgment, and thus gain the ability to use knowledge effectively and to good purpose. James asks, "Who is wise and understanding among you?" and says that such one should demonstrate it, not simply by manifesting his wisdom in an intellectual way, but by "his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom."[85]

Resisting the Crippling Power of Bitterness

Our freedom will never be complete if we allow resentment over our past experiences in an unfree system to take root in our hearts, to create a spirit of bitterness that impregnates our thoughts, speech, and actions.

On the one hand, such feelings are understandable. Some of those thus affected had non-Witness parents, parents who possibly were members of another religion. Because of the Watch Tower

82 Compare Mark 7:19; Colossians 2:16, 17.
83 Romans 14:13, 17, *NRSV*.
84 Galatians 5:1-4.
85 James 3:13, *NIV*.

organization's indoctrination, for years they had relatively little to do with those parents, were distant toward them, treated them cooly because of their parents' disinterest in, or rejection of, "the Truth." The alienating process often began from the start, when they were told that their becoming Witnesses would be 'opposed by God's adversary' and family members were cited as possible instruments in such Satanic opposition, if through nothing more, then through efforts at discouraging further involvement.[86] Viewing matters in this light could not help but color their feelings toward parents who did not "buy into" their new religion with them. Now they have come to realize that the belief system they equated with "the Truth" is a system that, along with a measure of truth, also contains some very serious and fundamental errors, and moreover that it was the teachings built *on those errors* that were the very ones causing them to express such coldness toward others, their parents included. In some cases they could renew the expression of natural affection they owe those who were their source of life on earth, who fed them, provided for them, cared for them, loved them with parental love. In other cases they could not—their parents had already died. They are beyond their reaching to reconfirm their love for them. The sense of remorse this can produce is difficult to measure.

Those with marriage mates may have gone through comparable experiences. Many had basically good marriages but when they became part of the Watch Tower organization and their mate did not, at times the strain—a strain not attributable to their thereafter manifesting more fully the qualities exemplified by God's Son, but instead due to their striving to respond to organizational pressures and submit fully to organizational rules and policies—resulted in a weakening or a dissolution of the marriage. In the latter case, the breakup of the family may have also adversely affected children. To realize that "it did not have to have happened that way" is not an easy thought to bear. What was broken in such cases can rarely be reconstructed.

I think of one woman who, during the many years of her marriage, though a loyal wife to her non-Witness husband, dutifully viewed him as "of the world" and also refrained from having children by him since "the end" was so near. Not long after she realized that the organization's claims to, in effect, speak for God were not legitimate, and at a time when her appreciation of her husband's good qualities had been renewed and heightened, he was suddenly killed in an auto accident. The thought of what their marriage might have been,

86 Compare the statements in the Watch Tower's study books *The Truth that Leads to Eternal Life*, page 16; *You Can Live Forever in Paradise on Earth*, pages 23, 24.

and produced, had she not been governed by misconceptions increased her grief far beyond its normal reach, was crushingly depressing.[87]

Others reared their children within the organizational framework and inculcated in them the concept that the organization was God's earthly "channel" and had exclusive claim to His direction and favor. When integrity to Biblical truth in time caused them to take a stand based on conscience, they found themselves cut off from their own children, had the devastating experience of seeing their children accept the organization's labeling of them, their parents, as "apostates," persons to be shunned. To hear of a son or a daughter getting married and then to be excluded from those invited to the wedding, to learn of the birth of a grandchild and not be invited, even allowed, to see the child, can produce enormous pain of heart. Hundreds, even thousands, of parents and grandparents have experienced or are yet experiencing that pain. For others, there is the realization of lost time that can never be regained, years of life spent pursuing goals that, though dressed up by terms such as "Theocratic goals" and "Theocratic careers" and described as "putting Kingdom interests first" and "making wise use of the yet remaining time," were ultimately goals without true substance, true worth, true meaning. They thought, as I did, that they were working to bring people to God and to Christ, and for this they were happy to give all they had. In the end they realized that the organization appropriated the people to itself, subordinated them to itself, viewed them as obligated to it for whatever they had received. This has left those laboring zealously with the sense of having been "used," induced to make sacrifices of time, strength, resources, and talents on an organizational altar, all for the furtherance of that organization and its interests. The sense of feeling "cheated" of unrecoverable assets, assets far more valuable than money, can result.

Thankfully, many, including some who have lost the most, do not allow bitterness to gain a foothold in their hearts. If they love freedom they cannot afford to do so. Bitterness, rancor, vindictiveness are crippling emotions, not liberating emotions. Along with the constant striving for retaliation they foment, they are evidence that one is still a prisoner, still shackled to the past. Years ago, a

87 Though no longer associating, she nonetheless had a "Witness funeral" conducted by a local elder. Many of her husband's friends and business associates, like him not Witnesses, attended. The elder's funeral talk consisted entirely of argument in support of the organization's teachings on the subject of death. Of her husband, the person he was, what could be learned from his life, the qualities he manifested—nothing was said. That was the final touch, both confirming her decision to withdraw and causing her sense of regret to overflow.

friend gave me a copy of material appearing in an article in *Time* magazine. Among other things it contained these penetrating and beautifully expressed thoughts on the power of forgiveness:

> The Old Testament view of forgiveness was contained in a verb that dominates its penitential literature, the Hebrew word *shuv*, meaning to turn, to return. The doctrine implies that man has the power to turn from evil to good, to change, and the very act of turning will bring God's forgiveness. *Those who do not forgive are those who are least capable of changing the circumstances of their lives*. . . .
>
> The psychological case for forgiveness is overwhelmingly persuasive. Not to forgive is to be imprisoned by the past, by old grievances that do not permit life to proceed with new business. Not to forgive is to yield oneself to another's control. If one does not forgive, then one is controlled by the other's initiatives and is locked into a sequence of act and response, of outrage and revenge, tit for tat, escalating always. The present is endlessly overwhelmed and devoured by the past. Forgiveness frees the forgiver. It extracts the forgiver from someone else's nightmare. "Unless there is a breach with the evil past," says Donald Shriver, "all we get is this stuttering repetition of evil." . . .
>
> Forgiveness is not an impulse that is in much favor. It is a mysterious and sublime idea in many ways. . . . Forgiveness does not look much like a tool for survival in a bad world. But that is what it is.[88]

Back in 1982, I first began personal correspondence with Carl Olof Jonsson, in Sweden.[89] In an early letter, after mentioning some among former Witnesses who seem to "feel obliged to take an opposite viewpoint of everything" they had previously stood for or believed, he added:

> They have not really left the Watch Tower movement. They are still as fixed to it as ever—inversely fixed to it. Often they spend the rest of their lives in attacking it. I could understand if they kindly tried to *help* the Witnesses—but very often they are filled with bitterness.

I can understand the sense of indignation, often motivated by compassion for others, felt by many at the destructive hurt that certain organizational policies have produced, even one's having a burning desire to try to bring an end to that hurt. I also believe, however, that it is a grave mistake to think that the end justifies

88 Italicizing mine. Quoted from the January 9, 1984 issue of *Time* magazine, reproduced with their permission. Copyright 1984 Time Inc. All rights reserved.

89 He is referred to in *Crisis of Conscience* (page 141) as having sent to the Governing Body the material later published as *The Gentile Times Reconsidered*. He is also the co-author of the book *The Sign of the Last Days—When?*

the means. There is nothing dishonourable or unloving in refutation of falsehood. Nor does it inidicate animosity toward anyone to disagree with him or to place before him the evidence of the erroneous nature of beliefs or practices he may hold. It can be a loving act. But the *way* in which it is done, the *spirit* in which it is done, is the determinative factor. I cannot personally view some methods employed as genuinely reflective of the approach and spirit of God's Son and the tenor of his message to his disciples.

Some who have terminated their affiliation with the Witness organization have engaged in picketing of Kingdom Halls or assemblies of Jehovah's Witnesses, have engaged in unusual tactics evidently designed to gain the attention of the news media. This is nothing new. Persons opposed to the Watch Tower organization have been doing this from the time I was a child half a century ago. In the case of some involved, I know that their sole motive is to bring certain injustices and misrepresentations to light. I cannot answer as to the motive of others. In either case, I am not attempting to pass any judgment on them themselves in saying that I personally view such methods as not only counterproductive but also as reflecting unfavorably on the one we are committed to serve, Christ Jesus. There can be a difference between publishing and publicity. It is always good to publish truth. But to seek publicity for publicity's sake does little or nothing as far as publishing truth is concerned. It frequently only publicizes the unusual antics, the more extreme and sensational slogans used, and the dissidence existing, while any worthwhile message that comes through is usually infinitesimal.

Interviews by the news media have the potential for accomplishing considerable good in bringing facts to the attention of a large number of people. I have, in the past, acceded to interviews requested by the news media. At the same time, I have never *solicited* a single interview, and I have turned down far more requests than the few I accepted. My personal experience has been that the results are rarely satisfying. All too often what is sought is something of a sensational nature—which does little for the advancement of the good news. In one radio interview that I accepted (originating in Florida) the interviewer employed continual sarcasm and exaggeration in his references to Jehovah's Witnesses and their beliefs and conduct. I spent virtually the entire program in defending them, expressing my conviction as to their overall sincerity and decency, and in pointing out to the interviewer the way in which his remarks distorted matters and unfairly cast them

in a false light. I was happy to make those expressions and found that the only satisfying part of the experience.

Basically, then, I sympathize with the concern, even the indignation, some feel and I feel a similar concern. But I do not necessarily sympathize with the *methods* that are sometimes used to express those feelings. I am convinced of the rightness of the apostle's counsel:

> Each of you must be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to be angry. For a man's anger cannot promote the justice of God.[90]

The easy way is all too often not the best way. In human relations, when one is indignant because of a perceived injustice the easiest thing in the world is to lash out at the source of the hurt. It is also a sign of weakness rather than of strength. To exercise self control, to maintain a measure of calm, to take the time and the effort to seek out the true cause of the problem and the most effective means of dealing with it takes far more strength and resolve than simply to vent one's feelings.

A very large quantity of material has been published (in print and on the Internet) by former Witnesses and others about the Watch Tower organization. I do not question that many so engaged are sincerely motivated, feel that they should not be simply passive but should "do something." But I honestly believe that a great amount, perhaps even the majority, of what is put out does more harm than good. Christian freedom does not mean license to say whatever we want. We are called to follow closely in Christ's steps, and of him we read:

> He was insulted and did not retaliate with insults; when he was tortured he made no threats but he put his trust in the righteous judge.[91]

Vindictive speech, ridicule, name-calling, magnifying minor faults far out of proportion, refusing to give persons the benefit of a doubt, to admit the possibility of their being sincerely, even if mistakenly, motivated, making no allowance for their wrong actions being the product of victimization through erroneous conceptions—none of this does anything for the cause of truth. Unfortunately such things are often found in much of the "anti-Watch Tower" literature put out. They are also found in Watch Tower literature in its expressions regarding any who do not agree with its pronouncements, those it labels as "apostate." So the matter

90 James 1:19, 20, *NEB*.
91 1 Peter 2:23, *JB*.

often comes full circle with the same dismal repetition of wrong being met with wrong. To the contrary we are urged:

> Call down blessings on your persecutors—blessings, not curses . . . . Never pay back evil for evil. Let your aims be such as all men count honorable [let everyone see that you are interested only in the highest ideals, *JB*]. If possible, so far as it lies with you, live at peace with all men. My dear friends, do not seek revenge, but leave a place for divine retribution; for there is a text which reads, "Justice is mine, says the Lord, I will repay." But there is another text: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; by doing this you will heap live coals on his head." Do not let evil conquer you, but use good to defeat evil.[92]

In this the apostle was faithfully reflecting the teaching of God's Son:

> You have learned that they were told, "Love your neighbour, hate your enemy." But what I tell you is this: Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors; only so can you be children of your heavenly Father, who makes his run rise on good and bad alike, and sends the rain on the honest and the dishonest. If you love only those who love you, what reward can you expect? Surely the tax-gatherers do as much as that. And if you greet only your brothers, what is there extraordinary about that? Even the heathen do as much. There must be no limit to your goodness, as your heavenly Father's goodness knows no bounds.[93]

There is an effort on the part of the Witness leadership to make it appear that any publicly made expression of disagreement with them, and any presentation of refutational evidence of their teachings and policies, is a "persecution" of them. If that were actually the case then there is no question that their own course would mark them as among the worst persecutors today, for they regularly and constantly publish their disagreement with other religions and endeavor to prove their teachings to be false. They are quick to seize upon news items reflecting negatively on other religions and publish these. They must expect to be judged by the same standards with which they judge others.[94] But by such misrepresentation of matters they can justify their use of harsh expressions towards any questioning their claims and views.

My own experiences with the men heading the Witness organization were, ultimately, unpleasant. I did not believe it possible that the men I had known and worked with for years, before whom

92 Romans 12:14, 17-21, *NEB*.
93 Matthew 5:43-48, *NEB*.
94 Matthew 7:1, 2.

I had expressed myself, my convictions and concerns, in hundreds of collective discussions, could take the kind of actions or employ the type of methods they did. Yet I can honestly say that I do not now, nor have I in the past, harbored any sense of rancor. There was an obvious initial shock, but since then I have wasted no time in moody review of those events, in brooding over the past. The abrupt change that resulted, the difficulties of beginning life anew when approaching sixty, have left no scars that I am aware of, no reason for feeling self pity. I feel and believe that the experience has had an improving effect for me; I sincerely hope so. Moreover I can say that there is not one of those men with whom I would not be willing to speak, calmly and dispassionately, to whom I would not be willing to provide food, lodging or whatever else he might need. If enmity exists, it is not on my side. I can even believe that at least some among them might express a similar attitude toward me—though feeling compelled not to do so because of the organization to which they belong.

Summing up the liberating breakthrough Christianity brought, one source gives this effective presentation:

> . . . there is a new liberty towards *God*, which dispels fear and leads to freedom in his presence of a most intimate kind (Rom. 8:15-18; Gal.4:1-7). . . . This results in service to God which is quite free in character (Rom. 1:9). It also leads to a new freedom toward *others*. This includes freedom from the fear of others' judgments as well as from one's own attempts to manipulate them. It also includes freedom in the communication of one's thoughts, expression of one's emotions, the opening up of one's life and the sharing of one's possessions. Indeed the free service of others, the voluntary giving of oneself in love to them, is at the very heart of this conception of freedom (1 Cor. 9:19; 1 Thess. 2:8) . . . .
>
> So this freedom granted by God not only transfers men and women out of a broken relationship with God, and a defective solidarity with men, into a new community with both, but also inclines them to live the kind of life that will extend and deepen that new community itself.[95]

Ways in which these benefits of freedom can be shared and enjoyed in communion with others certainly merit our serious thought and consideration.

95 *Paul's Idea of Community*, Robert Banks (Eerdmans-Anzea Publishers, 1988 reprint), page 27.

18

A Congregation of Free People

Keep on speaking in such a way and keep on doing in such a way as those do who are going to be judged by the law of a free people.—James 2:12.

THEY HAD come to an abrupt and painful awakening. The things in which they had found a sense of security—the religious routines and the sense of righteousness these had brought them, the persons they had most revered and looked to as their religious guides, in fact the whole authority structure that governed their religious life—all this had been shown to have been seriously lacking, had led them into error with potentially fatal consequences. And their shaken response was, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

That cry comes from the first century. It was voiced by persons who had heard Peter make plain that the religious authority structure they had looked to as representing God had not only opposed, but had later endorsed the elimination of a man who spoke truth from God. Now they were being called on to repudiate the action of that religious governing body and their own support and complicity in what it had done and to be baptized in the name of the very one who had been violently eliminated.[1]

The specific history-making circumstances those people experienced are not our portion today. We have not had among us God's Messiah in person, and no religious authority structure today can express rejection of him in the precise manner that the Sanhedrin of Jesus' day did. And yet all of us are in position to show that we personally reject the action taken against him then, and that we put full faith in him now as our God-given hope of life. As did Peter and the other apostles, we can say the words they spoke to the religious governing body of their people, "Obedience to God comes

1 Acts 2:22-38.

before obedience to men."[2] We can show that we accept his Son as our one and only God-appointed Head, the Director of our lives. The question is, how do we do this? In those first-century words, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Service to God—What It Embraces

If we read the account that follows those words, as well as all the rest of the Christian Scriptures, we will find that Christianity is not presented as either a system-oriented or building-oriented way of life and worship; nor is it defined by creeds or law codes. Neither is it centered upon specific activities viewed as specially and distinctly devotional and religious and therefore as having superior merit before God over other activities not so viewed. It is a way of life that embraces *all of life* and all of life's activities. In reading the words of God's Son and the writings of his apostles we find that it is not a matter of belonging to some religious system, practicing certain religious acts at certain times and certain places, but what we are as *persons* in our daily life that shows whether we are his followers or not. Only because this is true could his apostle say, "Whatever you are doing, whether you speak or act, do everything in the name of [as representative of, *Living Bible*] the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." He could even say to those then slaves, "*Whatever you are doing*, put your whole heart into it, as if you were doing it for the Lord and not for men, knowing that there is a Master who will give you your heritage as a reward for your service."[3]

I believe that it is because of failure to realize this that many who have pulled free from an authoritarian, works-oriented, legalistic religious organization (and there are a number of these) often feel perplexed as to how to look on the matter of service to God in their new state of freedom. Back in 1976, as a member of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses, I was assigned to prepare material on the subject of "sacred service" and the resulting *Watchtower* articles were titled "Appreciating the Treasure of Sacred Service" and "Rendering Sacred Service Night and Day."[4] The material was based largely on a discussion of the significance of the Greek term *latreuo*, translated as "to render sacred service" in the *New World Translation* (usually "serve" or "worship" in other translations). Both articles presented Scriptural evidence that

2 Acts 5:27-29, *JB*.
3 Colossians 3:17, 23, 24, *NEB*.
4 Published in the October 1, 1976, issue of the *Watchtower*, pages 592 to 602.

sacred service to God is not something restricted to particular activities such as preaching or meeting attendance, something engaged in during certain separate, special times in certain special places or ways, but is all-embracing, something to be *lived*, service that takes in all of life. It showed that the Scriptures speak of "sacrifices to God" that include, not only "the fruit of lips which make public declaration to his name," but also "the doing of good and the sharing of things with others, for with *such sacrifices* God is well pleased."[5] Typical was this paragraph (page 598):

> 9 "Sacred service," then, is not something that occupies only a portion of our lives. It is not limited to just one activity or a certain number of activities but it takes in every aspect of our daily living. It can be summed up by these words: 'Keep doing all things as unto Jehovah, whether eating or drinking or doing any other thing.' (1 Cor. 10:31) Showing how all-embracing this service should be, the apostle says at Romans 12:1, 2: "I entreat you by the compassions of God, brothers, to present your bodies a sacrifice living, holy, acceptable to God, a sacred service with your power of reason. And quit being fashioned after this system of things."*

In harmony with this, after stating, "Many things are involved, but your aim, your goal and your heart motivation are key factors in determining whether what you do is really 'sacred service' or not," the second *Watchtower* article went on to show that a large part of the sacred service of parents involved their children, "an inheritance from Jehovah," and "holy" to Him.[6] Parental care of children was a "night and day" feature of their sacred service. Mates render sacred service in maintaining the honor of marriage, in their relationships to one another, working to the success of their marriage.[7] A housewife could do her work at home as "unto the Lord" and contribute to the esteem of the good news among others by the quality of the home life, by her hospitality, her kindness and her neighborliness.[8] Men could promote and bring credit to the good news by the way they

5 Hebrews 13:15, 16; it may be noted that earlier, in verse 10, the writer uses the term *latreuo* in discussing the 'serving' done by offering sacrifices and offerings at the tabernacle or temple, and then contrasts this with sacrifices of a spiritual kind that Christians offer at a very different "altar."

6 Psalm 127:3; 1 Corinthians 7:14.

7 Compare Ephesians 5:21-29.

8 Titus 2:4, 5; compare Proverbs 31:10-31; Acts 9:36-41.

performed their daily work, putting their heart into what they did "as into work done for the Lord and not merely for men."[9] When done in that spirit, how could it be anything other than service to God?

Many found this information refreshing, expressing that it brought greater meaning to their lives and made them feel that things other than just "field service" and meeting attendance counted. Not all were pleased, however. After a time, some of the traveling overseers, whose main work was (and is) to push "field service," complained to the Service Department that the outlook presented undercut their promotion of such activity. By placing other features of life on an equality with "field service," it diminished the importance of what they were doing and took some of the power out of their urgings for 'more hours in the field.' I personally know of no others who expressed objections.

In 1980, shortly after my resignation from the Governing Body, another set of articles appeared in the August 15 issue of the *Watchtower* designed to return the application of "sacred service" only to such things as field service and meeting attendance. These articles stressed, in fact based much of their argument on, the fact that to the Jews in pre-Christian times "sacred service was always related to worship in obedience to the Law covenant" and "did not refer to everyday things of the people."[10] It argued that since other people besides Jehovah's Witnesses ate, drank, worked, cleaned homes, obeyed authorities, then how could one's doing these things ever be viewed as this kind of service to God? No, only "special," "out of the ordinary" activities such as publishing the message found in the Watch Tower publications and attending meetings where these were studied merited being viewed as service sacred to God. It downplayed any thought that *motivation* could make a difference and give a spiritual quality to acts of an ordinary nature so that they became sacred service to God, making those activities an expression of our worship to God.

A "Question from Readers" in this same issue built on this argumentation tied to a comparison with Israelite service under the old Law covenant. It similarly sought to rule out any thought that in a man's work, or in one's care for family, home, or similar activities one could be performing "sacred service" to God. No, it must be "something out of the ordinary." It in effect presented an authorized list of what activities could be so considered. Primarily these were: preaching ("field service"), meeting attendance, family study and consideration of the daily *Watchtower* text, pioneer and missionary service, Bethel

9 Colossians 3:17, 23, *PME*.
10 The *Watchtower*, August 15, 1980, pages 22, 24.

service (at the headquarters or a branch office), work as a traveling overseer, elder or ministerial servant. Thus, by definition, if a parent conducts a formal Bible study with his wife and children (and this is always done using a publication of the Watch Tower Society), this is sacred service, service to God (and he can also list the time spent on his "field service report slip"). If he spends time *informally* in simply talking with a son or daughter about their daily life and activities—exploring their thinking, letting them express their thoughts, feelings and concerns, helping them with their problems at school or to develop a healthful outlook on life, or teaching them skills to equip them for adult life as a responsible Christian—this does not qualify as part of such "sacred service" to God. The rigidity of this outlook is without doubt one of the major reasons why there is such an undeniably poor success rate among Jehovah's Witnesses as to young people remaining with the organization once they reach their majority. I recall that when sent to the small Central American country of Belize in the 1970s one of the organization's representatives there of his own volition informed me that out of all the young men who had grown up in a Witness family in that country not a single one had till then continued with the organization. While this is an extreme case, the fact is that in all countries the number of young people leaving the organization when coming "of age" is disproportionately large.

The *effect* on the mental outlook of Witnesses that these organizational decrees—defining 'what is service sacred to God and what is not'—produce is illustrated by what took place when the above-mentioned 1980 articles were considered at the Kingdom Hall in Gadsden, Alabama. At the conclusion of the study, the elder conducting the *Watchtower* study, Tim Gregerson, asked the audience a question. He said, "Suppose there is a sister in the congregation whose husband has died and she is going through some difficult times, and one of us goes there to help her out with her problems. Would that be 'sacred service'?" At first he got no response but finally one person offered to answer and said, "No, that would not be sacred service." Tim then pointed out that the articles throughout had stressed the religious aspect of "worship" involved in "sacred service" and he then referred the audience to the words of the disciple James:

> The form of worship that is clean and undefiled from the standpoint of our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself without spot from the world.[11]

11 James 1:27, *NW*.

He then stated that James specifically describes caring for such a widowed sister as "worship," hence it surely was "sacred service."[12] Being present, I also called attention to the reference to "sacred service" in Hebrews chapter thirteen and its including the doing of good and showing of generous kindness to others as "sacrifices" the Christian offers at a spiritual altar. Typical, however, of the effect of such material on so many Witnesses was the expression of another elder, Dan Gregerson.[13] After hearing the Scriptural evidence just mentioned, he indicated his dissatisfaction and said, "I'd like to call to the attention of the brothers that there is a 'Question from Readers' at the close of this issue and there the *Watchtower* shows just what 'sacred service *really* is." He had no Scriptural refutation of what had been expressed, but the decisive factor for him clearly was what the *Watchtower* said.

Actually, while not specifically placing it on its list of defined acts of "sacred service," the "Question from Readers" did give brief mention to the expression in Hebrews as to 'doing good and sharing with others,' saying that it included the rendering of assistance to "our brothers [fellow Witnesses] who are in need, suffer calamity or are in distress."[14] But, just as the offering of a "sacrifice of praise" to God was arbitrarily limited by the *Watchtower* to "public preaching," so the 'doing good' and 'sharing good things' were restricted, narrowed down to the above limitations, as applying only to aid given to fellow Witnesses, not to others.

Yet the Bible itself places no such limitation on the meaning of the very *broad* expression "to do good." Nor does it do so as regards the equally *unspecific* reference to our "sharing with others."[15] Again, the effect of such "authorized" definition limiting the apostolic expression only to special or emergency help for fellow members of the Witness religion contributes toward many

12 Tim Gregerson was at the time a "pioneer," had already been such for some years and continued to be for some time thereafter. So, he was not someone "lacking in zeal for field service."

13 Dan is Tim's uncle, brother to Tim's father, Tom Gregerson, and also to Peter Gregerson. See also *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 364, 367.

14 Hebrews 13:10-16.

15 Although caring for fellow Witnesses "in need" at least received mention in this discussion of "sacred service," and although occasional articles dealing with the showing of interest and concern for the aged, the needy, appear in the *Watchtower* magazine, we have already seen in Chapters 6, 10 and 16 that in *actual practice* this rarely receives any notable attention. Though not true of all, it is a simple fact that if faced with putting in time in "field service" or spending time visiting such older, sick or needy ones, by far most Witnesses—and most elders—will feel under pressure to opt for "field service," particularly if their "hours" are a bit low. Such visiting may be allowed implied inclusion in "sacred service," but it is not service that can be *reported*. This should make no difference—but it clearly does, as Karl Adams' letter to Nathan Knorr frankly states. (See Chapter 6, pages 188, 189; see also page 206.)

Witnesses manifesting a very detached, at times even cold, unconcerned attitude toward neighbors, people in their community, an attitude much like that of the priest and the Levite in the parable Jesus gave in answer to the question, "Who is my neighbor?" Those religious individuals, active in "sacred service," had more important things to do than to concern themselves with a neighbor in difficulty, and it was a Samaritan, *a man of a differing religion*, who came to the aid of the person in trouble, who proved himself a true neighbor.[16] The narrow attitude advanced cannot harmonize with Jesus' teaching:

> Be children of your heavenly Father, who makes his sun rise on good and bad alike, and sends the rain on the honest and dishonest. If you love only those who love you, what reward can you expect? Surely the tax-gatherers do as much as that. And if you greet only your brothers, what is there extraordinary about that? Even the heathen do as much. There must be no limit to your goodness, as your heavenly Father's goodness knows no bounds.[17]

The whole thrust of the 1980 *Watchtower* material is to place service to God in a separate category of life's activities. It attempts to differentiate between "service" and "sacred service" to God, restricting the latter to acts of a very distinctive, unusual nature. It is true that the particular term under discussion (*latreuo*) is used in Scripture only with reference to "service to God (or to a god or gods)."[18] For pagans, such service involved things done in temples, in special buildings, special rites and special offerings to their gods. For the Jewish people, it was usually applied to acts performed in fulfillment of the Law covenant, including ceremonies, sacrifices, holy festivals, priestly service. All this is evident. The notable thing about Christianity, however, is precisely the fact that service to God is so vastly broader, so all-pervasive, *not* limited to activities performed in certain buildings or in prescribed forms, affecting only part of one's life.

The writer of the 1980 *Watchtower* articles is right in saying that "to the Jews, sacred service was always related to worship in obedience to the Law covenant." He is wrong in claiming that this rules out its application to "basic, essential acts of human living." While "obedience to the Law covenant" did include some "out of the ordinary" activities distinctive from everyday activities, obedience to that Law covenant also included much that was part of

16 Luke 10:29-37; compare 17:15-19.
17 Matthew 5:45-48, *NEB*.
18 See the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Abridged Edition), pages 503, 504.

the daily life of Israelites. The Law covenant did not merely prescribe periodic animal sacrifices, fastings, holy festivals and ceremonies, but called as well for the daily exercise of fairness, justice, righteousness, honesty and compassion in their everyday dealings with one another. Its laws called for kindness toward, not only fellow Israelites, but also slaves and foreign residents, even for consideration to animals and birds.[19] The Israelites commonly minimized these factors, however, in favor of those of a ceremonial and distinctively "religious" aspect, taking pride in these as proof of their devotion to God, rather than in the daily aspects of life. The *Watchtower*'s presentation follows a comparable course, shows the same mistaken viewpoint.

Faced with the fact that the apostles of Jesus Christ did indeed speak of "basic, essential acts of human living" as "done *unto the Lord*" and "done *for God's glory*," the *Watchtower* writer relies on an erroneous distinction between service to God and *sacred* service to God. How can service to God be anything but sacred? It is as if God places a premium, a greater value, on special acts as compared to daily acts, on the unusual as compared to the regular. Jehovah, in rebuking Israel, clearly showed that this is not the case. He showed that the daily exercise of mercy, compassion and justice was always of greater importance to him than special acts which the Israelites viewed as so distinctively "sacred." As He stated:

> For in loving-kindness I have taken delight, and not in sacrifice; and in the knowledge of God rather than in whole burnt offerings.[20]

As to this "knowledge of God," through his prophet Jeremiah, Jehovah asks the son of King Josiah:

> As for your father, did he not eat and drink and execute justice and righteousness? In that case it went well with him. He pleaded the legal claim of the afflicted one and the poor one. In that case it went well. "Was that not a case of knowing me" is the utterance of Jehovah?[21]

Much as the people at Pentecost cried, "Brothers, what shall we do?" so Israelites asked how to render acceptable service to God. Through his prophet Micah, Jehovah presented their question and answered in this way:

> With what shall I come before the LORD [Jehovah/Yahweh] and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD [Jehovah] be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

19 Leviticus 19:9, 10, 13-15, 17, 18, 32-37; 23:22; 25:35-43; Deuteronomy 15:7-11; 16:18-20; 22:1-4, 6-8; 24:10-15, 17-22; 25:4.
20 Hosea 6:6; compare Matthew 12:7.
21 Jeremiah 22:15, 16.

> He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD [Jehovah] require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.[22]

The *Watchtower* writer downplays the importance of *motivation* as capable of converting ordinary acts into sacred service to God. Yet the decisive importance of motivation is seen even in those pre-Christian, Law covenant times, for it was precisely the *lack* of right heart motivation (evidenced by their unjust and unkind dealings with others *in their day-to-day life*) that caused God to "detest" the very acts of "sacred service"—sacrifices, keeping of holy days and festivals, fastings—performed by most of the Jewish nation.[23] This was true even though those were special, "out of the ordinary" acts related to "worship in obedience to the Law covenant," as the *Watchtower* article expresses it. Jehovah made plain that without right motivation in daily life and in the daily course of activities, all the sacrifices, festivals and other service lost any meaning or value.

The new covenant results in God's law being written on *hearts*, and that law is not a code but is the law of love and the law of faith, factors that do, and should, come into play in the whole of life, not just during special times. This is what enables, not merely someone of a special, priestly class, but any person to offer his or her '*very self* as a living sacrifice' in service to God, so that his or her whole life is one of worship to God.[24] It should be obvious that the totality of the offering does not allow for the "living sacrifice" to be something one turns on, or activates and makes operative, at certain times in certain activities, and turns off, or deactivates and makes inoperative, at all other times and in all other activities. One need only read the remainder of Romans chapter twelve to see that, after the apostle's exhortation to his brothers to 'offer themselves as such a living sacrifice,' he discusses a very wide spectrum of activities. Personal relationships with others, expressions of affection and humility, hospitality and kindness, living in peace "with all men," not only within the Christian community but outside thereof, are all part of this "living sacrifice." In offering their whole selves, they give not just certain times but the entirety of their lives to God. In all of this they show that they are not 'conformed to the world' but exemplify in their daily lives, in their dealings with others, the standards and principles taught by God's Son. As evidence

22 Micah 6:6-8, *NIV*; compare Psalm 15.
23 Isaiah 1:11-17; Amos 5:11-15, 21-24.
24 Romans 12:1, *NEB*.

that the 1980 *Watchtower*'s insistence on a very narrow application of the Greek term *latreuo* is without foundation from a lexicographical standpoint, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, comments in this way as to the apostle's use of *latreuo* at Romans 12:1:

> It involves the dedication of the whole person to God in a way which is rational, embracing the whole mind, and practical, reaching out into the practicalities of daily living in the church and the world.[25]

The apostle nowhere lists "field service," meeting attendance, service at some religious institutional headquarters, or any such activity as defining how one offers this "living sacrifice." The view of service to God, worship, insisted upon by the Watch Tower organization is in reality nothing more than a reversion to a pre-Christian viewpoint, not merely to Law covenant times, but to an unhealthy view characteristic of a law-oriented, works-oriented attitude. It would diminish the role of the heart—and all its spontaneity—by emphasis on prescribed and regulated forms and functions as the criterion for determining what qualifies as "service to God" and what does not. It turns the clock back to the time before the entrance of the "freedom whereby Christ set us free." Among today's religions, the Watch Tower organization is not alone in so doing.

It was a similar distorted, anachronistic view of what Christian service to God involved that, in the centuries following the apostolic period, led to the concept that to engage in "worship" meant "going to church," and that elevated what was done "in church" to a superior spiritual level compared to what the believer might do outside of "church." The buildings in which "church services" were carried out correspondingly took on a special sacredness. It produced the view that the man who was a priest or minister lived a spiritual life on a higher level, and of greater spiritual merit, than what could be attained by the ordinary man, such as a family man, who, by his work, supported his family. The priest or minister was preeminently "a man of God." Others were of the *laikos* (meaning,

25 Vol. I, page 885. Similarly, the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Vol. IV, pages 63, 64), quoted in a footnote in the October 1, 1976, *Watchtower* (page 598), says of the verb form *latreuein*: "The comprehensive use of *la.treúein* for the whole conduct of the righteous toward God is found first in Lk. 1:74. . . . in Phil. 3:3 we again find *latreúein* in a broad metaphysical sense in which it comprises the whole of Christian existence."

"of the *laos* or *people*"), and so a clergy-laity division developed. This same view eventually exalted celibacy, practiced by priests, monks and nuns, as a superior spiritual state, and "indirectly demeaned marriage . . . as an imperfect, second class estate." While the Reformation corrected some of the distortions in this regard, much still remains.[26]

A Difficult Transition

It was in large measure to help people adjust to a new and superior outlook that the Biblical letter to the Hebrews was written. For those to whom the letter is addressed, Christianity represented a remarkable and difficult changeover. It called for relinquishing many stereotyped views that throughout all their lives had governed their thinking with regard to worship of God. I believe that among professing Christians even to this day, most are hindered by remnants of the same outlook that blocked appreciation of the superiority of Christianity on the part of those to whom that letter was written. Many persons today are going through a struggle comparable to that experienced in the first century and feel a similar sense of a lack of confidence as to the course to take. They are unsure about the values that should govern their decisions regarding the manner in which they seek to serve God. Though today's *circumstances* differ in their historical origin, I believe that much of the problem many face stems from not comprehending the *essential lesson* found in that first-century letter. At the very least, persons can draw comfort from realizing that whatever struggle they are now going through, it is no greater than that of those to whom the letter to the Hebrews was addressed. In its introduction to the letter to the Hebrews, *The Expositor's Greek Testament* makes these perceptive observations:

> The aim of the writer . . . was to open up the true significance of Christ and His work, and thus to remove the scruples, hesitations and suspicions which haunted the minds of the Jewish Christian, embarrassing his faith, lessening his enjoyment, and lowering his vitality. . . . A transition of equal moment and encompassed by so

26 These last-quoted words are those of Steven Ozment in *When Fathers Ruled—Family Life in Reformation Europe* (London: Harvard University Press, 1983), page 10. It may be mentioned here that for many decades the Watch Tower headquarters had a monastic quality, the vast majority of the staff being formed of single men, and maintenance of their celibate state being required for them to remain at headquarters (or in the branch offices). Similar requirements originally applied to all single persons sent out as missionaries graduated from Gilead School. See *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 16, 18.

> much obscurity men have rarely, if ever, been summoned to make. . . . Brought up in a religion which he was persuaded was of Divine authority the Jew was now required to consider a large part of his belief and worship as antiquated. Accustomed to pride himself on a history marked at various stages by angelic visits, Divine voices, and miraculous interventions, he is now invited to shift his faith from institutions and venerable customs to a Person, and this a Person in whom earthly glory is suggested only by its absence and in whom those *apparently* most qualified to judge could discover nothing but imposture which merited a malefactor's death.
>
> Cherishing with extraordinary enthusiasm, as his exclusive heritage, the Temple with all its hallowed associations, its indwelling God, its altar, its august priesthood, its complete array of ordinances, he is yet haunted by the Christian newborn instinct that there is an essential lacking in all these arrangements and that for him they are irrelevant and obsolete . . . .
>
> To the Jew, in short, Christ must have created as many problems as He solved. . . . many a Jewish Christian must have passed those first days in painful unrest, drawn to trust Jesus by all that he knew of His holiness and truth and yet sorely perplexed and hindered from perfect trust by the unexpected spirituality of the new religion, by the contempt of his old co-religionists, by the enforced relinquishment of all outward garnishing and glory, and by the apparent impossibility of fitting the gorgeousness of the old and the bareness of the new into one consistent whole. [27]

"The gorgeousness of the old and the bareness of the new . . . " Truly, there was so much in the old that appealed to the senses—of sight and sound and touch—things of a visible, tangible nature to impress, even to awe. The grandeur and beauty of the temple, the size of its staff of temple workers and the ceremonial dress and activity of the priests and Levites as they mediated for the people with God before his altar, the sound of the chorus of Levitical singers, the sense of going to a place where God's presence was believed to be particularly evident and thus of having communion with Him by visible, tangible offerings, going to this place along with thousands of others three times a year for sacred festivals—there was simply *none of this to be found in the new Christian faith*. Its followers had not a single building of their own devoted to religious purposes, they met in homes, had no thrice-a-year festival assemblies, no priestly class or priestly vestment, no ceremonial

27 *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Vol. IV, pages 237, 238.

procedures, no visible altar, no material sacrifices, in fact no unique, distinctive symbols of any kind—for even in the celebration of the Lord's evening meal the things used to represent the body and blood of their Lord (and all that the offering of these implied) were simple bread and wine, basic table items. The seeming "bareness of the new . . . ."

Why It Is Still a Difficult Transition Today

In the first century many obviously did make the needed transition and learned that service to God, worship, did not consist of, depend on, or gain special merit from, attendance at some special place, some "sacred" building. Even the act of gathering together was not to be viewed as distinctively "religious," that is, more so than other facets of their lives. They came to appreciate that their gathering together was for mutual edification and expression of brotherly love, in encouraging one another, manifesting appreciation for one another as part of a family relationship under God's Son, not to give them a special feeling of "religiousness" or a sense of being "religiously cleansed" by the act of gathering.

Whatever progress was made in viewpoint in apostolic times, in subsequent periods professed Christians made a gradual but steady return to much of the old. They returned in large measure to that which appeals to the physical senses. Over a period of centuries they reverted once more to sacred buildings, visible altars, a separate class of special "servants of God" (whether priests or ministers) distinctively dressed, and to many similar things that impress the eye, that appeal to the ear, and that can be touched. Under the seductive influence of such things, understanding was all too often supplanted by mere emotional feeling. The Lord's evening meal, initially characterized by informal closeness and warm fellowship in an expression of a faith shared in common, was often converted into a largely ceremonial observance, the partaker going up to a church official who, in priestly fashion, administered the "sacrament." The people, the laity, felt "comfortable" in their relationship to God by virtue of their regularity at religious services, or by performing certain religious acts on a regular basis. This, coupled with the knowledge that they were generally part of a large religious system and affiliation, gave them a sense of security and of righteousness. They failed to appreciate the excelling spiritual value of the new because of its "bareness" and showed a preference for an outward glory like that of the old. And, despite their claiming great distinctiveness from "other religions," I believe

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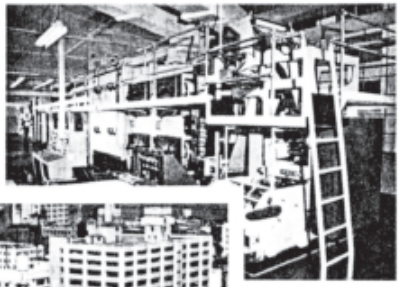

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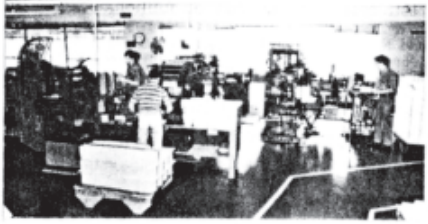

Shipping

Brazil

South Africa

From *You Can Live Forever in Paradise On Earth*, pages 196-198

that Jehovah's Witnesses manifest many of these same evidences of a return to the old.

Those associated with Jehovah's Witnesses are repeatedly reminded of their being part of a large organization, it even being pointed out that their numbers surpass that of some of the smaller nations of the world. They are frequently told that at certain stages of the organization's history God has brought forth revelations, "revealed truth," "new light," through it, as He did by speaking through his prophets of old. They have been taught to live in strict obedience to a remarkably extensive code of laws, handed down to them by men who claim to represent God in doing so, with rejection of their rulings being likened to Miriam and Aaron's rebellion against Moses. A steady flow of figures of numerical increase comes to them through the organization's publications; they periodically see pictures of large impressive buildings in different countries built or purchased by the organization, places designated "Bethels," from the Hebrew *beth´el* meaning "house of God." Many of these structures equal or surpass the Jerusalem temple grounds in size and area. Some make group pilgrimages to the international headquarters at Brooklyn, the principal "House of God," where the organization has very large, multi-storied properties covering many entire city blocks, or to the Bethel structure of their own country. They there see "House of God" staffs numbering perhaps into the hundreds, sometimes into the thousands, engaged in what is officially designated "sacred service," thus comparable to the service of the Levitical workers at the temple of old. The impact on their sight and minds conveys a sense of power, visible strength. They feel drawn to it and fear being separated from it.

Having worked at the international headquarters for 15 years, and having served on the Governing Body for 9 of those years, there is no question in my mind that the leadership has a virtual compulsion to be continually acquiring property and building new structures, that they draw from such physical expansion, not merely a sense of strength, but a reassurance of their unique position in the world as "God's channel." I also have no question, based on those same 15 years there, that in terms of what is actually *produced*—whether in literature or written communications or any other product—this could be accomplished far more efficiently by other organizations and with but a small fraction of the staff and holdings used by the Watch Tower organization. The program of physical expansion (in property and number of workers) embarked on almost seems to feed on itself and generate a self-perpetuating

need for more and more of the same. Since it is indeed impressive, and since the organization equates physical expansion with spiritual prosperity and blessedness, and since Witnesses provide the money needed, this unending acquiring and building has never been unwelcome to the leadership. (See the Appendix for additional details on the Watch Tower's building program.)

As did ancient Israel, Jehovah's Witnesses attend three "sacred" (by their definition) assemblies a year where large crowds at times numbering into the thousands flock together. Three times a week they attend five separate meetings, the major ones of these held at their Kingdom Halls, and they are assured that constant, faithful attendance at these meetings is a major factor in having a good standing before God. Of all the offerings they can make to God, none is assigned greater value and greater emphasis than their taking to the people the message found in the organization's publications and inculcating this in their minds; to this the expression "sacrifice of praise" is almost exclusively applied, and great stress is laid on making *regular weekly offerings* of such sacrifice on their altar of service as a major, decisive factor affecting their standing with God.[28] And, the vast majority are drawn to all this by the constant picture held out to them of all manner of physical, material rewards awaiting them in a near-at-hand paradise if they give their unstinting support to these things.

After being immersed in such an atmosphere for any period of time, what would be the effect on these persons if they were to be transported—not into the physical surroundings—but into *the kind of religious life* lived by the early Christians? I think the vast majority would find the change as difficult as did those to whom the letter of Hebrews was addressed. They would find it difficult to accept the remarkable simplicity of that religious life, its lack of virtually any physical, material impressiveness, its calling for faith that draws its strength from the unseen, not from what is seen, from what is eternal and not from what is temporal, transitory. The apostle emphasized the difference in saying, "we walk by faith not by sight."[29]

I believe this is at least one of the reasons why, when separating from the Watch Tower organization, many persons feel that they should search for something that offers similar things—not the same doctrines, but something that has some numerical strength,

28 The *Watchtower*, August 1, 1982, pages 18, 19.
29 2 Corinthians 5:7.

having special places where distinctive forms of religious service are carried on. Many seem unable to feel a sense of personal identity without "belonging" to a system, to some organization with visible, tangible features identifying it. They also feel they must be "doing something," meaning, some type of activity that is "different," distinctive. They still retain the outlook advanced by the *Watchtower* that service to God is sacred only if it involves what is "out of the ordinary." They fail to see that Christianity changed people's lives, not primarily by changing what they normally did from day to day, but primarily by virtue of giving a *new outlook and new meaning* to all that they did, giving a different *quality*, a different *spirit*, a different *motivation*, to all their activities.

The One Indispensable Essential

As to what Jewish Christians had earlier been part of, and the change they faced, we read this comment:

> The whole [Mosaic] dispensation [was] involved with things visible, tangible, material, evanescent. . . . It was a shadow of the good things to come; and to these real, eternal things Christ introduces men. . . . In Him we have throughout to do, not with external ceremonies and temporal arrangements, but with what is spiritual; in Him we come in touch not with imperfect revelations of God made through symbol and human medium, but with the very image of God. He mediates between God and man in virtue of His connection with both. He leads men into the true relation to God by Himself perfectly fulfilling the human life in obedience to God's will . . . . He is priest in virtue not of what is of the flesh, not by inherited office, but by virtue of His sympathy with men and His personal stainlessness . . . bringing men and God together by the pure and perfect surrender of Himself to God.[30]

All those visible, tangible things, and the men and special acts involved with their usage, had actually been only a *shadow* of the good things to come. Some clung to the shadow, to things that appealed to the senses, things that they could see, hear and feel, and this kept them from appreciating and genuinely embracing the far greater, grander, spiritual realities foreshadowed. [31] They failed to realize that the common purpose of the old covenant and the new covenant was to *bring men into fellowship with God*, and that the old, for all its impressive material features, was not designed to accomplish this in the full, complete sense that the new alone was capable of.[32] Contrasting the two, the apostle writes:

30 *The Expositor's Greek Testament*, Vol. IV, page 239.
31 Colossians 2:16, 17; Hebrews 9:11-14, 23-26; 10:1, 19-22; 12:18-24.
32 Emphasizing that the basic purpose of his work was to bring men into an approved personal relationship with God, the apostle Paul described it as "a ministry of reconciliation," and stated: "We are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal though us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."—2 Corinthians 5:18, 20, *NRSV*.

> If the ministry of the [old] covenant that condemned had glory, greater by far is the glory of the ministry that justifies. Indeed, when you compare that limited glory with this surpassing glory, the former should be declared no glory at all. If what was destined to pass away was given in glory, greater by far is the glory that endures . . . . We do not fix our gaze on what is seen but on what is unseen. What is seen is transitory; what is unseen lasts forever.[33]

It took faith to accept that, to put excelling value on the spiritual rather than on the visible, to engage in worship that was not impressive to the eye, had no special appeal to the ear, was not subject to touch, but which appealed to the heart and to understanding; a worship that had no need of special places, special times, special forms and functions, but that found its place in the day-long, everyday life of the person. It took faith to accept that *a personal relationship with God through his Son* was the one and only *essential*, that all other things are secondary, even, if need be, dispensable. It takes the same kind of faith to make a similar placement of values in our time.

The "Body of Christ," a Religious Organization or a Family-like Community?

If we enter into such a personal relationship with God through faith in his Son and his Son's sacrifice, we do not stand alone. We become part of that "free people" whose "law" is the law of love, written not on tablets but on human hearts.[34]

All of these are described as forming "the body of Christ."[35] Joining some religious organization, denomination or church has nothing whatsoever to do with entry into that body. We become members of that body of Christ in only one way, by our faith. Whoever has accepted God's Son as his Head becomes part of that body.[36] It is the *individual, personal faith* of each one that connects him or her to that Head, and the guiding headship of Christ always continues available to each one *as a person*. Though forming part of a collective body because of a mutually shared faith, no one is

33 2 Corinthians 3:9-11; 4:18, *NAB*.
34 James 2:8, 12; Jeremiah 31:33-34; Romans 7:6; Hebrews 8:10-13.
35 Romans 12:4,5; 1 Corinthians 12:12, 13.
36 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17; Ephesians 4:4-6, 15, 16. The Watch Tower doctrine of two classes of Christians creates an impossible situation for those not counted as in the "anointed" class. If not of that class, they are not included in the "body of Christ." Yet, surely these accept Christ as their *Head*, and if so, how can they not be part of his *body*?

dependent on the intervention or mediation of another member or group of members to have access to that headship or to receive its direction. For "Christ is the head of *every* man" and, through Christ, God gives to "*each one* [to *each* man and to *each* woman] the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good," allotting His gifts to "each one individually."[37] There are "varieties of gifts," "varieties of services, and "varieties of activities," but it is the "same Spirit," the "same Lord," and the "same God, who activates all of them *in everyone*."[38]

This fact of personal relationship to God and Christ is stated in another way in Jesus' words recorded at John chapter fifteen. He there represents himself as a vine and his followers as branches joined to that vine. He does not present himself as simply the *roots* of the vine and say that the congregation is the *stem* to which his followers must be attached. Neither is *the vital connection* an attachment to other *branches*. It is to Christ, the vine, and to Christ alone. It is by virtue of their holding firmly to him, and to him only, as the life-giving vine that they are all drawn into a unity. They remain in that vine by 'abiding in his love.' That love is the power that binds them into a unity, Christ's body.[39]

As members of that body, it is also true that "individually we are members one of another."[40] Christians are shown to be, not members of a religious *system*, but members of a religious *community*, a family-like body of persons under a family head, God's Son. The term "household" as in "household of faith," is used to describe it and that term emphasizes the family-like nature of the community.[41] Describing the effect of the good news for Gentile believers in opening up to them a new relationship, the apostle writes:

> Now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace . . . that he might reconcile both groups [Jew and Gentile] to God in one body through the cross . . . through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God. [42]

37 1 Corinthians 11:3; 12:6-11, *NRSV*.
38 1 Corinthians 12:4-6, 27-31, *NRSV*.
39 John 15:1-17.
40 Romans 12:5, *NRSV*.
41 Galatians 6:10; compare Ephesians 2:19.
42 Ephesians 2:13-22, *NRSV*; compare also 1 Corinthians 6:19.

It is true that, while called God's "household," they are also spoken of as "citizens," members of "a holy nation."[43] This might seem to lend support to a strong "organizational" aspect to the community. But although Christians are likened to a nation, no emphasis is placed on the concept of earthly, visible organization. They are reminded that their "citizenship is *in heaven*," and that they should be like those men of old who were looking forward to "the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God," to "a better country—a heavenly one."[44] (Compare Hebrews 13:14.) They are all "fellow citizens" of equal rank, and their only ruler is a heavenly one. Their being fellow citizens is, in fact, by virtue of all having Christ as their King, and they look to no earthly ruler, nor to any form of governing body serving as an earthly capital—at Jerusalem, Rome, Brooklyn or anywhere else—through which law and directives flow. The king's channel is by holy Spirit, which guides, directs, instructs. Had the apostles wished to emphasize the concept of organization this analogy of nationhood would have been ideally suited for doing so. Instead, in their writings they only rarely refer to this aspect and never stress it as dominant. Rather it is the *family relationship* that is consistently given greatest prominence. When they address fellow believers it is never as "my fellow citizens," but consistently and predominantly as "my brothers." (Likewise, though they form a spiritual temple and a royal priesthood, they do not address others as "my fellow priests.")[45] They are all part of God's household, brothers and sisters in the one family under Christ.[46] Christ himself had laid the foundation for this family viewpoint, saying:

> "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking around at those who sat around him, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."[47]

In the same spirit, Paul wrote to Timothy:

> Do not speak harshly to an older man, but speak to him as to a father, to younger men as brothers, to older women as mothers, to younger women as sisters—with absolute purity.[48]

Why, in the face of all such evidence and the apostolic example, would a religious system favor placing dominant emphasis on an

43 Ephesians 2:19; Hebrews 8:11; 1 Peter 2:9.
44 Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 11:8-10, 15, 16.
45 Ephesians 2:21, 22; 1 Peter 2:5, 9.
46 1 Timothy 3:15; 2 Timothy 2:19-21; Hebrews 3:6; 1 Peter 4:17.
47 Mark 3:33-35, *NRSV*.
48 1 Timothy 5:1, 2, *NRSV*.

organizational concept rather than this family relationship? The evident reason is because the latter, if genuinely applied, does not lend itself to an authoritarian approach. For in this family, there is "only one Father, and he is in heaven," and "only one Master, and you are all brothers."[49]

The Christian Ekklesia *of the First Century*

The most frequent expression found in the Christian Scriptures to describe Christians collectively is the Greek term *ekklesia*, usually rendered "church" or "congregation." It is notable, however, that this term *of itself* has no intrinsic religious meaning. Its common use in Greek was to describe an "assembly" of citizens called together to decide matters affecting their welfare. We find it used in this typical, secular, non-religious sense at Acts 19:32, 39, 41, in describing the hastily called gathering of silversmiths at Ephesus. It is evident that, of itself, it carries no idea of an "organization" in the sense of a structured arrangement, but simply that of a gathering of people to consider some matter of mutual interest, or of the people themselves so assembled.[50]

In the first century Christians did not "belong" to a local ecclesia, church or congregation in the sense of belonging to, or having formal membership in, a religious organization. If they gathered with others they were, *by virtue of the act of gathering*, part of the local "gathering" or "assembly" (*ekklesia*). The "call" that drew them together did not come from some religious authority. It was the call of the good news that drew them, a call not merely to share their own thoughts and views but primarily to hear God's message. And throughout the first and second centuries when they gathered it was, not in special religious buildings, but in homes.[51] Discussing the term *ekklesia* as used by Paul in his early letters, scholar Robert Banks states:

> . . . never during this period is the term applied to the building in which Christians meet. Whether we are considering the smaller gatherings of only some Christians in a city or the larger meetings involving the whole Christian population [in that city], it is in the home of one of the members that *ekklesia* is held—for example in the 'upper room' [Acts 20:8]. Not until the third century do we have evidence of special buildings being constructed for Christian gatherings and, even then, they were modeled on the room into

49 Matthew 23:8, 9, *JB*.
50 See, for example, the discussion of the term in *Paul's Idea of Community*, pages 34, 35.
51 Compare Romans 16:3-5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2.

> which guests were received in the typical Roman and Greek household.[52]

Similarly *The Expositor's Greek Testament* commentary states:

> Up to the third century we have no certain evidence of the existence of church buildings for the purpose of worship; all references point to private houses for this.[53]

Since they themselves formed a spiritual "dwelling place for God," they had no need of special buildings for worship (nor did God's "dwelling" in them limit itself to certain times on certain days).[54] As archeological evidence shows, homes at that time rarely had a room capable of holding more than about forty persons.[55] The gatherings therefore were relatively small. Such home gatherings provided a context in which the sense of a family-like relationship could develop, for these provided an atmosphere conducive to the expression of the bonds that joined them in a brotherhood, and favorable for that sense of brotherhood to grow and to deepen. They could more readily come to know one another better, become more aware of mutual needs, interests and concerns.

This picture of a congregation may be quite different from the prevailing viewpoint of most persons today, certainly different from what most are accustomed to. Yet it embraces what is perhaps an even more fundamental aspect of Christianity and of the essential meaning of the word "congregation" or "church" (*ekklesia*) in Christian terms. Pointing to this, well-known Swiss scholar Emil Brünner writes:

> Where the Word of God is preached and believed, where two or three meet in the name of Christ, there is the Church. Whatever else may be said about the Church, this is fundamental. This statement has *never*—not even at the present day—been understood in all its revolutionary power. The meeting of two or three must be recognized to be the Church in however imperfect a form. When a father gathers his household round him to expound the Gospel to them in his humble simple way, or where a layman, out of a full heart, proclaims the word of God to a group of young people, there is the Church. <u>Whoever departs from this rule, whoever thinks that something else has to be added to make this a real Church, has misunderstood the meaning of the very heart of the evangelical Faith</u>.[56]

52 *Paul's Idea of Community*, page 41
53 Vol. IV, page 212 (commenting on Philemon verse 2.).
54 Ephesians 2:21, 22.
55 See *Paul's Idea of Community*, pages 41, 42; *St. Paul's Corinth, Texts and Archaeology*, Jerome Murphy-O'Connor (Michael Glazier, Inc., Wilmington, 1983) pages 153-159.
56 *The Divine Imperative*, Emil Brünner (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia, 1937), page 529.

Most today do feel that "something else has to be added." The very simplicity of the matter goes contrary to their concept of a "congregation." Religions generally seek to superimpose the idea of "organization" or "denomination," with an accompanying authority structure, as necessary to validate any gathering as a "real" Christian congregation. The Scriptural message does not support them. Christ's promise does not support them.[57] The gathering of two or three need not be all that one would wish, nor should it deaden the impelling force to reach out to yet others, but it is sufficient for Christ's words to apply: "I am there among them." The addition of a hundred or a thousand persons to the two or three, the transferal of the gathering place to some large building, or the presence of a dozen or more men viewed as organizationally appointed office-holders, would not add one whit to the "realness" of this being a Christian gathering or congregation. The presence of God's Son, the Head of the congregation, is the sole validation needed.

Getting Together to Encourage to Love and Good Deeds

These facts help us appreciate the sense and force of this often-quoted exhortation:

> Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.[58]

Christian freedom offers no excuse for showing apathy toward others, simply living for oneself. Love draws people together. As members of Christ's body, "individually we are members one of another."[59] Does, then, this stress on meeting together stated in the quoted text limit our Christian freedom, inhibit our expression of it, or once again make us subject to law, to rules? To the contrary it gives our freedom greater meaning, greater value.

There is nothing connected with the rigidity or formality of works of law in our interesting ourselves in others, showing brotherly affection for them and for their spiritual growth, by our seeking to be with them in brotherly gathering. Neither in the exhortation at Hebrews 10:24, 25, nor in any other part of Scripture do we have any declared

57 Matthew 18:20.
58 Hebrews 10:24, 25, *NIV*.
59 Romans 12:5, *NRSV*.

set of rules governing such gathering together by fellow believers.[60] While this text is used by some as a sort of spiritual "club" to enforce strict attendance at meetings routinely held at specific times, this calls for reading more into the exhortation than is there. The Greek word in this text rendered "give up," "neglect" (or similar renderings), infers *desertion* or *abandonment*, something far more serious than a mere irregularity or occasional infrequency of attendance.[61] Nor is there anything to show that being in attendance at such gatherings was ever presented by Jesus' apostles as having greater merit as "worship" over other expressions of love and faith made in a Christian's daily life. We do not find this idea expressed in any of the apostolic writings. As a source earlier referred to expresses it, Christians learned, or were encouraged to learn, that:

> . . . worship involves the whole of one's life, every word and action, and knows no special place or time. . . . Since all places and times have now become the venue for worship, Paul cannot speak of Christians assembling in church [*ekklesia*] *distinctively* for this purpose. They are already worshipping God, acceptably or unacceptably, in whatever they are doing.[62]

In considering the Biblical evidence of the early Christian community, the remarkable fact is that we find there simply is no set pattern laid out for us as regards Christian gathering. Initially, following Pentecost, the apostles and others gathered *daily* in the temple for discussion and exhortation.[63] It is unrealistic to assume that most would be able to do so after that initial period, nor is there any indication that they did. Their sharing meals with their brothers in various homes is listed right along with their temple gatherings, and, since meals were often the occasion for Christ's informally conveying spiritual benefit, this was likely true in this case.

At Ephesus, during the first three months Paul met at the synagogue, hence on a *weekly* basis each Sabbath.[64] When moving out of the synagogue, he then held "discussions *daily* in the lecture-hall of Tyrannus," doing this over a two-year period.[65] It is illogical to

60 The *Expositors Greek Testamen*t (Vol. IV, page 347), in discussing Hebrews 10:25, comments on the writer's use of the rather lengthy phrase *episynagogen heauton* (gathering together of selves) instead of the simple *synagoge* (assembly, congregation), saying that *synagoge* "might rather have suggested the building and formal stated meetings, while *episynagogen heauton* denotes merely the meeting together of Christians."

61 Compare its use at Matthew 27:46; 2 Corinthians 4:9.

62 *Paul's Idea of Community*, page 92.

63 Acts 2:46; 5:42.

64 Acts 19:1, 8. The evidence points to similar synagogue attendance among many Christians initially, that attendance evidently continuing until opposition made it unfavorable. (Acts 18: 24-26; compare John 16:1, 2.)

65 Acts 19:8-10, *NEB*.

assume that those who met with him were the same persons each day, since few persons could be free to spend their time this way for a two-year period. We know that Paul was there day by day; we do not know definitely of anyone else who was. Nor is there anything to show that thereafter in Ephesus—or in any other place—Christians met with identical frequency. In many cities in the Roman Empire the slave population was very large, forming fully one third of the population of larger cities, such as Rome, Ephesus, Antioch and Corinth.[66] While many of these were not mere laborers but held positions at times of quite high responsibility (as was Joseph in Egyptian Potiphar's household), it is still unlikely that most slaves were free to attend gatherings at will.

Aside from such accounts in the book of Acts, the Christian Scriptures, though filled with all manner of exhortation, simply contain nothing outlining or commending any *specific program* for Christian gathering, either as to *time, frequency* or *format*. The exhortation to gather together is there, fellow love being the motivating force. The essential aim and purpose is stated, to stir one another up to love and fine deeds; but the *manner* and *form* are left open.

This feature of informal gatherings among early Christians allowed for persons to express themselves, to be themselves, speak from their own minds and hearts, not simply repeat supplied material, engaging in some tightly controlled, pre-programmed, catechistical question-and-answer session. People would genuinely come to know one another, know how a person actually felt and viewed matters, not merely hear people make expressions that were actually representative of someone elses' thinking and views, rather than the individual's own.

In the absence of tight control by an authority structure, what prevents such meetings from deteriorating into debates over dissenting views? Even during the time of the apostles, who *did* have a divinely assigned special authority, there is nothing to show that they or anyone else, individually or collectively, exercised a rigid control over the gatherings and discussion of Christians. Perhaps the most extensive, almost the only, discussion of meetings is that found in First Corinthians chapter fourteen. And there the only emphasis is on basic and considerate order and a seeking to convey understanding.

Elsewhere, of course, there are exhortations against debating, antagonistic speech, uselessly involved discussions and similar negative practices.[67] But, rather than exercise some coercive power over believers, the means of combating these wrongs was primarily *persuasive*, emphasizing and encouraging positive qualities.

66 *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. V, page 54
67 Galatians 1:13-15; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 6:4, 5; 2 Timothy 2:14-16; Titus 3:9.

This freeness, then, represented both an opportunity and a test. It called on all those sharing it to demonstrate that they were indeed gathered together to build one another up and encourage to love and fine deeds—not merely to make a display of personal knowledge, or advance and debate personal theories. Instead they were to show consideration for others, exercising self-control for the good of all, manifesting humility, deference, patience, understanding, fellow feeling, compassion and sincere concern to reflect the headship of God's Son.[68] These are the true remedies for confusion or bickering, the proper source of peace and harmony. They are the product of God's holy Spirit and it was that Spirit that would serve as the controlling factor, preserving order and assuring a healthful, wholesome atmosphere and quality to the gathering.[69] As long as persons showed a spirit of deep respect for Christ's headship, viewing him as "among them" even when their visible numbers might be as apparently insignificant as two or three, matters would not get out of hand or deteriorate into useless, unwholesome, disputatious talk.[70] The same remains true in our time.

Divisions come when persons seek to make definite, explicit and conclusive what the Scriptures themselves leave indefinite or subject to more than one possible understanding. They come when persons make major issues out of what—when the whole picture is viewed—occupy the place of minor points; when they make rules out of what is simply counsel or a general statement of principle. They may also come when persons fail to acknowledge that, while they themselves have a personal relationship with God and Christ, so do all their brothers and sisters, and that none has some special "line of communication" with God and his Son that is not available to every other member of the body. This can protect us against thinking we have some unique insight or specially intimate relationship that sets us apart from others, makes us a divine "channel" for them.

Faced with the various Biblical interpretations one can find, sometimes differing widely one with another, it seems the greatest safeguard rests in seeking always to keep the whole picture, the overall message, in view, not isolating one part from the other. The reason for such a wide variety of interpretation of various points undoubtedly has a re-

68 Romans 12:3, 9, 10, 16; Colossians 3:7, 12-17; 2 Timothy 2:23-26; Titus 1:9, 13; James 3:13-17; 1 Peter 4:8-11; 5:2-5.

69 Ephesians 4:3; Galatians 5:13-21.

70 Matthew 18:20.

lation to the tendency to focus on one part of Scripture rather than looking at it as a whole. A friend recently sent me some information that included a quotation from B. F. Westcott, who shared in the development of the well-known Westcott and Hort text or recension of Scripture. In his book *The Bible and the Church*, he makes this comment:

> No temptation is more subtle or more potent than that which bids us judge everything by one standard. Practically we are inclined to measure others by ourselves, other ages by our own, other forms of civilization by that under which we live, as the true and final measure of all. Against this error, which is sufficient almost to cloud the whole world, the Bible contains the surest safeguard. In that we see side by side how God finds a dwelling-place among nations and families in every stage of social advancement, and recognizes faithful worshippers even where they are hidden from the eyes of prophets. The absorbing cares of daily life, the imperious claims of those immediately around us, tend to narrow our sympathies, but the Bible shows to us, in an abiding record, every condition and every power of man blessed by the Divine Spirit. It lifts us out of the circle of daily influences and introduces us to prophets and kings and deep thinkers and preachers of righteousness, each working in their own spheres variously and yet by one power and for one end. It may be objected that devout students of the Bible have often proved to be the sternest fanatics. But the answer is easy. They were fanatics because they were students not of the whole Bible but of some one fragment of it to which all else is sacrificed. The teaching of one part only, if taken without any regard to its relative position in connexion with other times and other books, may lead to narrowness of thought, but the whole recognizes and ennobles every excellence of man.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians urging them to be "united in the same mind and the same purpose," the context shows that he was appealing, not for a total uniformity of understanding of each and every point in Scripture, but rather for the putting aside of divisive *attitudes* that were splitting them up into factions, so that they could be of a united *disposition* and *outlook*.[71]

The test of true unity is not uniformity of belief on every single point. Paul's letters almost without exception show that among

71 1 Corinthians 1:10-17, *NRSV*. Of the word "mind" (Greek *nous*) as used by Paul, the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Abridged Edition), page 637, states: "It first means 'mind' or 'disposition' in the sense of inner orientation or moral attitude." Compare also Romans 15:5, 6.

Christians in the different places to which he wrote some saw certain things differently from others. Christian unity proves itself genuine when differences of viewpoint *do* exist and yet the persons holding such differing views refuse to allow this to *divide* them. And they do this because of recognizing that, while differing in understanding of certain points, they are members of a spiritual family sharing a common faith based on clearly stated, foundational teachings contained in the good news.[72] Not uniformity, and certainly not a humanly *imposed* uniformity, but love is "the perfect bond of union."[73]

This also provides the favorable climate in which knowledge and understanding can grow and deepen. Differences of viewpoint, rather than dividing, can move persons to greater efforts at understanding—both as regards the viewpoint itself and as regards the person advancing it. They can rouse us to increased study and thought, so as to deal with whatever problem those viewpoints may present, and can impel us in efforts at finding a solution for them in love. They can in this way result in making evident just how genuine the Christianity of each one is, even as the apostle indicates at 1 Corinthians 11:19.

Christian freedom thus represents a *challenge* to us in our association with others, for it calls us on to demonstrate that we truly do have "the mind of Christ."[74] If we steadily and genuinely 'hold fast to him as our head' in all things and at all times, we will never fail in proving ourselves to be harmonious "members one of another" in his body of followers.[75]

Is an Authority Structure Needed?

How did Christian congregations come into being in the first century? There is nothing to indicate that people were "organized" into a congregation. How did a congregation form? It formed simply as a result of people *congregating*, *getting together*, doing so out of mutual faith and mutual interest in building up one another in that faith. What then of the different terms found in the Christian Scriptures, such as elder, overseer, deacon ("helper," *TEV*), teacher, shepherd?

First-century circumstances in this regard can serve as a model. This cannot, however, be a *precise* model. The reason is that not *all* the circumstances remain the same today.

We read that the household or family of God was "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus him-

72 Romans 14:1-6, 13-22.
73 Colossians 3:14.
74 1 Corinthians 2:16; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; Titus 3:2-7.
75 Ephesians 4:15, 16; Colossians 2:17-19; Romans 12:5.

self as the cornerstone." Though not present on earth, Christ Jesus remains with us, and "in him the whole structure is joined together."[76] But that is not the case with the apostles. They have ceased to be. The very fact that they were for a '*foundational' purpose* implies that their function was fitted for the beginning stages of Christianity. The "prophets" referred to may be Christian prophets, rather than the pre-Christian prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures.[77] If so, the fact that the prophets are mentioned in the same way as the apostles would indicate a similar *initial* role in Christianity, one that, like that of apostleship, was due to end.[78]

Like many other religions, Jehovah's Witnesses accept that there is no succession of apostles beyond the first century. Yet as we have seen, while not taking the *title* of apostle, nor speaking of themselves as holding the *office* of apostle, men in different religions endeavor to robe themselves with apostolic *authority*. The Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses assumes authority equalling that of the apostles, at times even beyond that of the apostles.[79] The leadership of various other religions does similarly. We can be "apostolic" today only in the sense of holding to the apostolic *teaching*. Aside from Christ Jesus, holy Spirit, and God's Word, those few men were, by virtue of their divine appointment, the one *external* source of authority which any congregated group of Christians would rightly recognize. But their divinely received apostolic assignment and authority was unique. It does not exist today. That has considerable bearing on our understanding how certain circumstances in the initial stage of Christianity and our own time may differ.

76 Ephesians 2:19, 20, *NRSV* .

77 Compare Acts 15:32; 21:8-10;1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; Ephesians 4:11.

78 *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol III, page 84, similarly comments: "In Eph. 2:20 the prophets form part of the 'foundation' of the church. This image suggests that the period in which the foundations of the church were laid is over, i.e. the prophetic office is a thing of the past. The apostles are here the NT counterpart of the OT prophets. Together they constitute the foundation, 'Christ Jesus himself being the chief cornerstone.'" It may be noted that the term "prophet" in the original Greek (*prophétes)* basically means "a proclaimer, one making known messages from a divine source." (This is discussed in detail in articles I prepared for *Aid to Bible Understanding* on the subjects "Prophecy" and "Prophet," the same material being found in the revised edition called *Insight on the Scriptures*.) The proclamation *may* or *may not* involve prediction of future events and circumstances. (Compare Acts 15:30-32.) The apostles themselves, by their speech and writings, performed the essential function of a prophet, and the divine message they made known, thereafter recorded and preserved, forms an integral part of the foundation of our faith to this day. Whatever the messages made known by other Christian prophets, they were evidently not major in significance, for we have but two proclamations recorded, both by the same individual, Agabus.—Acts 11:27, 28; 21:10, 11.

79 See Chapters 4, 5 and 12.

A Dynamic Arrangement—Not a Static One

Another factor that bears on our understanding is the principle set out at Ephesians 4:11-16. It states that the services rendered by individuals within the congregations, including those provided by apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherds and teachers, were all designed to *bring people to a goal*. As we have seen, the goal was, not for them to remain childlike, needing others to teach and shepherd them, but for them to "*grow up in every way* into him who is the head, into Christ."[80] The passage of time should *lessen* their need of others to render such services and should *increase* their own ability to act as grown, mature persons who are not constantly dependent on others. In the letter to the Hebrews the writer reproves those he addresses, saying, "*By this time* you should be teaching others."[81]

Any religious system that perpetuates the *dependence* of its members on the services of certain men is working against the goal set forth. Not that every person is expected to develop to become like every other person, having the identical abilities or "gifts" in identical measure. But all should become "adult" Christians, mature in understanding and in the ability to live a Christian life, to make mature decisions that are their own, not those of someone else. They should all be functioning members of "the body of Christ," not just *receiving* the services of other members, but each *contributing* a valuable and beneficial service himself or herself. That is the picture conveyed to us in the Christian Scriptures.[82]

Instead of continuing in constant need of shepherding service by others, they are to gain strength so as to be able to go themselves to the aid of others. Not to some church officials or organizational leaders, but to the Christians in Galatia *generally* Paul writes:

> My brothers, if someone is detected in sin, you who live by the spirit should gently set him right, each of you trying to avoid falling into temptation himself. Help carry one another's burdens; in that way you will fulfill the law of Christ.[83]

Discussing this exhortation, one commentary states:

> It is very impressive that to 'love one another,' 'bear one another's burdens' and 'fulfill the law' are three equivalent expressions. It shows that to love one another as Christ loved us may lead us not to some heroic, spectacular deed of self-sacrifice, but to the

80 Ephesians 4:11-16, *NRSV*.
81 Hebrews 5:12-14, *NAB*.
82 1 Corinthians 12:4-25; 1 Peter 4:10, 11.
83 Galatians 6:1, 2, *NAB*.

> much more mundane and unspectacular ministry of burden-bearing. When we see a woman, or a child, or an elderly person carrying a heavy case, do we not offer to carry it for them? So when we see somebody with a heavy burden on his heart or mind, we must be ready to get alongside him and share his burden. Similarly, we must be humble enough to let others share ours. To be a burden-bearer is a great ministry. It is something that every Christian should and can do. It is a natural consequence of walking by the Spirit. It fulfills the law of Christ.[84]

Emphasis on Service and Function, Not Office and Position

A final factor that needs consideration is that the various designations of shepherd, teacher, evangelizer, and so forth, describe *services* to be rendered, *work* to be done on behalf of the Christian community, not *offices* in the sense of *institutional positions* in a structured arrangement.[85] As we have seen, the apostle does mention "apostles, prophets, and teachers" in his comparison of the Christian community with the human body. But previous thereto he describes the spiritual gifts that enable *all, each and every one, of the members* (hence, including the apostles, prophets and teachers) to care mutually for one another, and in doing so he focuses, not on offices or organizational positions, but on *services* and *work*, saying:

> There are varieties of service, but the same Lord. There are many forms of work, but all of them, in all men, are the work of the same God. In each of us the Spirit is manifested in one particular way, for some useful purpose. . . . But all these gifts are the work of the one and the same Spirit, distributing them separately to each individual at will.[86]

84 *Only One Way, The Message of Galatians*, by John R. W. Stott, pages 158, 159. In *Paul's Idea of Community*, page 147, Robert Banks correspondingly points out that in the apostle's letters to the Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians, "Paul always addresses the whole community. Nowhere [in these letters] does he entrust special responsibilities to any single group vis-à-vis the remainder." He adds: "Pastoral responsibility can never remain the preserve of a select few but always exists as an obligation upon every member of the community—even if some have a more advantageous position or a greater gift for it, and so can devote themselves more energetically to the task." (Compare 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14 with 1 Corinthians 16:15-18; 15:58.)

85 The English term "office" can, of course, refer to an assigned *duty* or *task*, but unfortunately the concept of organizational position and authority more readily comes to mind for most persons. While many translations contain the expression "office" at 1 Timothy 3:1 with reference to a man's desiring to serve as an overseer, the apostle's original writing does not contain a term equivalent to "office" but simply refers to "overseership" (*episkope*). Thus some translations contain renderings such as "If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer." (*NIV*) That the apostle immediately follows this by saying, "He desires a noble *task*," also shows that it was a work (Greek *ergon*) or service that was in view, not an ecclesiastical or organizational office or position. Compare 1 Corinthians 16:10, 12; Ephesians 4:12; 1 Thessalonians 5:13.

86 1 Corinthians 12:5-11, 28, *NEB*.

The apostle Paul demonstrates the emphasis on the service or activity performed, rather than an office, by sometimes using simply a *verb form* rather than a *noun*. As an illustration, if one uses the noun "president," the thought of an *office* is immediately conveyed. If instead the verb form "presiding" is used, the thought goes to the *action* and not to an office or position. In verse 28 of the section of Paul's letter to the Corinthians from which the previous quotation comes, along with such nouns as "apostles," "teachers," "prophets," the apostle also lists some "verbal" nouns, literally "helping" and "giving of direction."[87] Some translations render these "verbal" nouns by such terms as "helpers, administrators" (*RSV*), "helpers, good leaders," (*JB*), "helpers, counsellors," (*PME*), "assistants, administrators," (*NAB*). Other translations, recognizing clearly that what is described are not *official positions* but *functions* and *services*, render the expressions as "*forms of assistance, forms of leadership*," (*NRSV*), "*assistance, administration*" (*NAB*, Revised Edition), "[those who have] *ability to help others or power to guide them*," (*NEB*). As scholar Robert Banks, states:

> They [the two Greek nouns (relating to assistance and administration)] simply mean the rendering of assistance and the giving of direction in a less personalized way. . . . 'helpful deeds' and 'practical initiatives' are about as close as one can get. Once again these terms are not technical in character. Certainly no official positions in the church are in view. Their application to functions rather than the persons engaged in them, their ranking so far down the list of gifts and, perhaps, their occurrence only here in the New Testament all support this.[88]

In the *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. I, page 197, we find this related comment:

> The present writer believes that there was as yet no institutionalized or precisely differentiated offices in the church known to Paul. . . . This is confirmed by the list of gifts in Rom. 12:8, where the *prohistamenos* ["giving direction" or "caring for"] is characterized by *spoude* (zeal). The *prohistamenos* is here listed alongside the *didaskon* (he who teaches), the *parakalon* (he who exhorts), the *eleon* (he who does acts of mercy). All of these words are participles which suggest an activity rather than an office.

Another factor worth keeping in mind if we are to develop an accurate viewpoint in this area is that *often the original language*

87 1 Corinthians 12:28.
88 *Paul's Idea of Community*, pages 144, 145. [underling mine]

words allow for a fairly wide variety of meanings. Some translators choose those meanings that lend support to the concept of a structured arrangement and of considerable official authority. As one example, the *New American Bible* at Romans 12:8, employs the expression, "he who rules should exercise his authority with care." Here the phrase, "he who rules" translates the Greek *ho proistámenos* (literally, the [one] standing before). Other translations giving an authoritative cast to their translation use such terms as "the man in authority" (*PME*), "leader" (*NEB*, *NRSV*), "leadership . . . govern" (*NIV*), "officials" (*JB*), "officeholder" (*AT*). Yet the *Revised Standard Version* renders this same expression simply as "he who gives aid." Why such a difference?

It is because the original language term (*proistemi*) has a wide latitude of meaning. Sources show it can mean to lead, to direct, to assist, to protect, to represent, to care for, to support, to concern oneself with, to apply oneself.[89] The context is the guide as to which of these meanings is involved and generally, in the places where this term appears in the Christian Scriptures, translators choose between the two senses of "to lead" and "to care for."[90] Those inclining to give a tone of authority, do so; those favoring a sense of caring for and supporting similarly show this by their translation. Whatever the case, the rendering "he who gives aid" has full validity and certainly harmonizes well with the spirit of the Christian Scriptures as a whole, and particularly with the example and spirit of God's Son.

The same phrase appears at 1 Thessalonians 5:12, where we find this exhortation (*NRSV* rendering):

> We appeal to you, brothers and sisters, to respect those who labor among you, and *have charge of you* in the Lord and admonish you.

Again we find a similar range of translations of this phrase. Some read: "[those who] *exercise authority* in the Lord" (*NAB*), "[those] *over you* in the Lord" (*RSV*); "[those] *above you* in the Lord." Other translations, however, read "[those] who *lead you in the service* of the Lord" (*AT*) and "those whom the Lord has chosen *to guide* [you]) (*TEV*). Here, in this verse, unlike 1 Corinthians 12:28, three participial forms ("working," "caring for [or leading]," and "teaching [or admonishing]" rather than nouns are used. Showing the difference this produces, Banks comments:

89 *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Abridged edition), page 938; *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. I, page 193.

90 Exceptions are the occurrences at Titus 3:8, 14, where the sense is that of applying oneself, occupying oneself with, concentrating on something.

> Together these three words simply indicate the effort expended by such people in carrying out their tasks, the supportive character of their work and the note of exhortation and warning appropriate to it. . . . what is in view here is not official positions within the community but special functions.[91]

Restricted Views Caused by Preconceptions

Aside from the leanings of certain translations, we ourselves may often allow what we are accustomed to today to color our understanding of the past. We naturally tend to transpose or project backward existing customary viewpoints, superimposing them on past circumstances. If we live in a highly organized society, or are accustomed to a structured religious system, we may allow this to influence our understanding of Scriptural expressions in ways that go beyond what the evidence shows.

If we see the word "minister" in a scripture we may think of religious "ministers" as we see them today. Yet the word used by the Christian writers (*diakonos*) means simply a "servant, helper, assistant."[92] The lowly, humble sense the word conveys is perhaps best expressed in Jesus' expression:

> In the world, rulers lord it over their subjects, and their great men make them feel the weight of their authority; but it shall not be so among you. Among you, whoever wants to be great must be your servant [*diakonos*, "minister" (*NW*)], and whoever wants to be first must be the willing servant of all—like the Son of Man; he did not come to be served [from the verb *diakoneo*, "to be ministered to" (*NW*)], but to serve."[93]

In this *basic* sense, every Christian, not just one or a few persons in a group, should be "ministers," that is, persons who place themselves *at the service of others*. Being a "minister" in this sense is far different from what most persons today would understand the term to mean.[94]

The same Greek word is rendered "deacon" in some cases, and this, too, likely causes us to think in terms of church office, whereas

91 *Paul's Idea of Community*, page 144 [underlining mine].

92 The infinitive verb form, for example, is used at Luke 10:40 of Martha's caring for household duties.

93 Matthew 20:25-28, *NEB*.

94 The Watch Tower organization goes beyond this basic sense of service in its insistence that all baptized Witnesses are "ordained ministers." It endeavors to equate them with denominational ministers who hold an office by virtue of ecclesiastical ordination. Contrast the articles in the *Watchtower* of December 1, 1975 and that of March 15, 1981, which latter article equates baptism with an "ordination ceremony." See also *Crisis of Conscience*, pages 231, footnote 13, and pages 357-360.

again the sense is simply that of a "helper" or "assistant," one who serves in some needed way.[95] The Scriptures give us no details and lay out no specific functions or forms of service for those called on in this way to serve for the benefit of a group.

Translations often render the term *episkopos* as "bishop" and it is nearly impossible for the reader not to think in terms of ecclesiastical office in such case.[96] Even where the more correct rendering "overseer" is found, however, there still may be the tendency to think of oversight in an official and organizational sense. I thought that way until working on the article "Overseer" for the *Aid to Bible Understanding* book and then found that the basic sense of the term does not at all require such view. As the material prepared for that work states in connection with the original source of the term:

> The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* . . . shows that the verb forms (*episkopéo* and *episképtomai*) were used in the basic secular sense of 'to look upon, to consider, to have regard to, something or someone,' 'to watch over,' 'to reflect on something, to examine it, to submit it to investigation,' and 'to visit,' being used in this latter sense especially of visits to sick ones, either by ministering friends or a doctor. The same dictionary shows that the Septuagint Version uses these terms in the deeper sense of 'to be concerned about something,' 'to care for something,' and applies it in this way to a shepherd and his sheep.[97]

Since, in its secular use, the term (*episkopos*) *can* be used to mean to superintend, scrutinize and inspect, we *could* superimpose on the references in the Christian Scriptures the idea of an *organizational* superintendent or supervisor who "oversees" the activity of others, inspecting and urging them on in their assigned work.[98] But why should we when the term itself does not *require* that? Even where such a definition might be *admissible*, why adopt it in preference to the equally basic and valid sense of a caring interest, of looking out for or visiting a person out of concern for his or her needs? Surely that sense harmonizes far better with the spirit of Christ's expressions to his disciples, the principles of humble service he set out. Paul captured this spirit in his statement:

95 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

96 "Bishop" is actually an *anglicization*, not a *translation*, of the Greek *episkopos*.

97 *Aid to Bible Understanding*, page 1260. Robert Banks observes: "Finally, the terms *episkopos* [overseer] and *diakonos* [deacon, minister] themselves should be freed of the official ecclesiastical connotations they have for us today, for they are not essentially different from the various other pastoral terms Paul uses. No real evidence exists to suggest that these terms had any technical meaning at this time. This is confirmed by the fact that in the second century Ignatius and Polycarp know of no episcopal pattern in the church at Philippi."—*Paul's Idea of Community*, page 147.

98 *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. I, page 188, 189.

> Do not think we are dictating the terms of your faith; your hold on the faith is secure enough. We are working with you [are fellow workers with you, *JB*] for your own happiness.[99]

Elders in the Christian Community

The most basic term relating to direction within a congregation is that of elder. In the Biblical languages, the word simply means "older person." It would be a mistake to think that the concept of eldership is something inherently tied in with religion. Actually, it is perhaps the oldest form of community direction known in history.[100] In Biblical times, Egypt, Moab, Midian, Gibeon all had their elders, who acted representatively for the families or communities of their residence.[101] When Israel settled in Canaan, every city and village had its elders serving in similar manner.[102] They are not depicted as some kind of a standing body of administrators functioning continually in an official way. Rather, they were evidently simply respected individuals who were *available* whenever the need arose, ready when called upon to render assistance in dealing with difficulties or problems, either on behalf of an individual or on behalf of the community as a whole.[103] There is nothing to show that there was any mode of appointing the Israelite elders in an organizational sense—no king, no priest "appointed" them as elders—nor that they were viewed as occupying an "office." The absence of any evidence for this would seem to indicate that it was instead simply a matter of a man's being *esteemed* by the community as a person manifesting mature wisdom and judgment, and being *recognized* or *acknowledged* as such by those who were already counted as among the community's elders. He was viewed as an elder primarily as a result of what he was as a person. The whole of the matter is reflective of the attitude of respect and deference shown in those times to persons of age and experience, whether in the family or in the community.

When Christian communities formed, a similar pattern of direction and help came into effect. True, we read of Paul and

99 2 Corinthians 1:24, *NEB*.

100 See *Aid to Bible Understanding*, page 1248. Few realize that both the Hebrew term (*zaquen*) and the Greek term (*presbyteros*) for "elder" correspond in meaning to the Arabic "sheikh," the Latin "senator," and the Anglo-Saxon "alderman," all of them meaning basically "older man."

101 Genesis 50:7; Numbers 22:4, 7, 8; Joshua 9:3-11.

102 Joshua 20:4; Judges 8:14, 16.

103 Compare Ruth 4:1-11; Luke 7:3-5.

Barnabas "appointing elders" in various cities they visited, and Paul's instructing Titus to "appoint elders" ("institute elders," *NEB*) in places throughout Crete.[104] The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testamen*t, however, says with regard to Acts 14:23:

> In secular Greek *presbyteros* simply meant 'senior man'—at least outside Egypt. Just possibly Luke understood it this way in Acts [14:23]. If he did then Paul appointed some 'elders' to a particular responsibility, not some people to the position of elder.[105]

Whatever the case, these were special circumstances and involved *apostolic authority*, exercised either directly or through a delegate (as in Titus' case), an authority no longer existent. It is certain that not all elders in all places came to be such by personal visitation of apostles or apostolic representatives, and there is nothing whatsoever said as to eldership ever being conferred by correspondence in Christian times. Their becoming such, then, evidently was the result of their being locally esteemed as persons of mature judgment and wisdom, resulting in their being acknowledged or recognized as elder brothers by those with whom they congregated. And, as the source just quoted suggests, in such case any "appointment" was not to become an elder, but an appointing of one already an elder to render some particular service within the congregation. (See Appendix for additional information.)

Thus, arrangements in Bible times seem to have followed very natural lines. Christians are presented as a brotherhood, with a family-like atmosphere.[106] In a family, where the head of the house (in this case, Christ) is away, the older sons of the family would generally be charged with caring for the household. Their duty would be to serve the family in a helpful and protective way by representing faithfully the absent head—but never to act as if they *were* the head themselves. They would not advance their own will or establish rules of their own making, but instead would faithfully remind the other members of the household of that which the head had given them in the way of counsel, instructions or standards to be followed.

104 Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5. Even this expression (Greek, *cheirotonéo*) is subject to a variety of understandings. The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Abridged Edition), page 1312, says on *cheirotonéo*: "1. Raising the hand expresses agreement, and hence *cheirotonéo* first means 'to vote for.' Other meanings that develop are 'to select' and 'to nominate.' . . . 2. 2 Cor. 8:19 uses the verb in the sense 'to select.' Paul refers to the person who has been 'chosen' to accompany him in the matter of the collection. In Acts 14:23 Paul and Barnabas 'nominate' the elders and then institute them into their work with prayer and fasting."

105 Abridged edition, page 1312.

106 1 Timothy 4:6; 5:1, 2.

In any group of people who gather as Christian believers today, there will reasonably be persons who are respected as showing mature judgment and wisdom and who, as the occasion calls for it, can respond to the requests or personal needs of an individual, or can act on behalf of the group as a whole in matters of concern. Formal "appointment" is not set forth in Scripture as in any way essential. The very family-like arrangement portrayed in Scripture would seem to weigh against such formality.[107]

An International Community

Christians of the first century met in relatively small gatherings in homes and, once Pentecost had passed, are nowhere shown to have ever produced large assemblies involving great numbers of persons drawn from different areas. They were, nonetheless, all part of a greater, earthwide community, gathering, or congregation, by virtue of being all spiritually gathered together to God's Son as their Head. As has been seen, this extended relationship did not express itself through being tied in to, or being subject to, Jerusalem as a center of religious administration, for they looked instead to a heavenly source as their center of direction. This unity was expressed in their love for all others, whether seen or unseen, personally known or unknown, who shared a faith in common, for that love is "the perfect bond of union."[108] They demonstrated their united relationship by hospitality, extending it to those previously strangers, by sharing their good things with one another, by coming to the aid of those in need wherever they might be, by sharing letters and other encouraging news with those who gathered elsewhere, by praying on such ones' behalf, feeling with them in their trials and

107 *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. I, page 200, notes that John begins his second and third letters by referring to himself as a *presbyteros* or "elder," and says: "R. Bultmann takes this to signify not so much membership of a local body of elders, as a title of honour for a bearer and deliverer of the apostolic tradition (KEK 14, 7, 95). This would mean not an officeholder in the institutional sense, but rather a man valued and respected widely in the churches of the day, in a similar way to the early prophets and teachers. His authority would lie solely in the importance of what he said, in the power of truth and of the Spirit." There is reason to believe this was to be true of all Christian elders—that the source of their power and the weight of their word would derive, not from an organizational appointment, but from their faithful conveyance of the Word of God, particularly the teachings of God's Son, and from the power of God's holy Spirit.—1 Corinthians 2:1-10; 4:19-21; 14:37; 2 Corinthians 3:1-6; 10:1-11.

108 Colossians 3:12-14.

difficulties—just as family members would naturally do for one another.[109] Thus, the observation is made regarding Paul's part in all this:

> [He] sought to build up enduring relationships of a personal, rather than an institutional character. . . . These scattered Christian groups did not express their unity by fashioning a corporate organization, but rather through a network of personal contacts between people who regarded themselves as members of the same Christian family.[110]

We can do the same today. We have the freedom to do the same today. It is right for us to desire association. We should be open to it, and not only be open to it, but should desire and seek it, strive to maintain it despite imperfections. Yet, if we cherish Christian freedom we will never do this at the cost of sacrificing integrity to truth—the truth represented in Christ. We remember the apostolic exhortation: "You have been redeemed, at tremendous cost; don't therefore sell yourselves as slaves to men!"[111] We do not need to buy fellowship at the cost of letting any religious system bind us to its creed and to submission to its authority structure, or let its leaders make us feel we ought to view ourselves as supporters of *their* denomination. An alive, open-minded and openhearted interest in *people*, a willingness even to *commit* to people in genuine interest and friendship, is one thing. Committing to a *system* is another.

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul likened professors of the Christian faith to "a large household." That "household" is remarkably large in our time. He portrayed the household as having vessels of contrasting kinds, some valued, others used only for ignoble purposes. And he urged Timothy to exercise discretion, even as one would not use for drinking and eating those vessels that were employed for washing soiled items.[112] Not that he would view himself as above others, or as unwilling to have contact with and show interest in or come to the aid of anyone. But he would discern the benefit of association with those whose qualities and attitudes were healthful, wholesome, genuinely upbuilding.[113] We do well to exercise similar discretion today. Rather than let the pressure to find association cause us to make quick decisions, we are wise to demonstrate patience, weighing the effect that the offered associa-

109 Matthew 25:34-40; Romans 12:10, 13, 15; 2 Corinthians 7:5-7, 13; Philippians 2:19, 25-29; Colossians 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:14, 15; Hebrews 6:10; 10:32-34; 13:1-3; 1 Peter 4:8-10.
110 *Paul's Idea of Community*, page 48.
111 1 Corinthians 7:23, *PME*.
112 2 Timothy 2:20,21.
113 Compare 2 Timothy 2:16-26 with 1 Corinthians 15: 1, 2, 12, 33, 34.

tion will have on our Christian freedom, assessing calmly its claimed benefits, examining the basis of its appeal. It may take time to find associates who can upbuild us and for whom we can have an upbuilding effect—in freedom. But the wait is worth the cost.

For a time, we may face a measure of loneliness. The examples God gives us in his servants as encouragement to our faith are largely of persons who also endured times of loneliness. Some even "wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground"! Remembering them, and the reward assured them, we can take heart, 'lift up drooping hands, strengthen weak knees, and make straight paths for our feet,' rather than go off in a course of least resistance.[114] If a choice is to be made, we can without fear forego for a time certain human association in the knowledge that we are never alone, that we retain at all times the transcending friendship of God and his Son. This alone we cannot do without, everything else we can if the need exists. Faith assures us that they will carry us along, sustain, strengthen, and encourage us with their love. When and as our efforts are rewarded in that we do find upbuilding friendships with others, we can view this as a plus, something added—never the essential.

That viewpoint can, I believe, actually result in our finding, if not more friends, then at least friends more worth having—genuine friends, whose friendship is not conditioned on the way an organization or a denomination or men in authority may view us, but on what we ourselves are. I know that I have personally gained, in many lands, more such true friends in the past decade than in all the sixty years previous.

Whatever the case, our freedom is enhanced by knowing that there are higher friendships, more vital friendships. People may fail us. No matter how genuinely we ourselves may respect, admire, or love them, they may fail us. The experiences of David and of the One he at times typified, Christ Jesus, forcefully illustrate this.[115] But God and his Son will never fail us, will never "leave us in the lurch," will always be there for us in our time of need.[116]

114 Hebrews 11:38; 12:1, 12.

115 Psalm 35:11-15; 38:11; 55:12-14; compare John 1:11; Matthew 26:20, 21, 33-49, 56; 2 Timothy 1:15.

116 2 Corinthians 4:8, 9; Hebrew 13:5, 6; Psalm 16:5-8; 30:5.

Afterword

What has been written presents, I believe, information that has sufficient factual evidence in support to make it at least worthy of one's serious consideration. Similarly, I feel that the essential *principles* set out have sound basis in Scripture. Whether the information will have any effect on those reading it or what they will do thereafter, is something that is, and should be, purely their own decision.

What I now write are essentially my own thoughts, based on the evidence presented, and the effect it has had on my own life. I set it out for whatever it is worth. I do it with no thought of offering it as some model that I feel others ought to follow. I think it is sound to say that the very *openness* of Scripture in certain areas should make anyone very cautious about doing that. That Christ, the head of the Christian household—whose spirit, along with that of God, guided apostles and disciples in writing the Christian Scriptures—should have seen fit to leave so much unsaid on certain major matters is surely notable. These include the frequency, form and manner of holding Christian gatherings, even of their content. As shown earlier, the expressions found in chapter fourteen of the First Letter to the Corinthians are about our most extensive source as to what early Christians did on these occasions, and what we have there is strikingly brief and lacking in detail. Similarly, while the apostolic letters reveal that men served fellow members of the Christian community in various capacities, we have at best only a very general description of the services they rendered—nothing that could be viewed as even a basic listing of particular duties.

In short, if we look to the Christian Scriptures to find some kind of a spelled-out, organizational manual we will look in vain. In view of this, I feel it is presumptuous for any of us, whoever we are, to speak where God has not spoken, to define and order what the head of the household, Christ, has not defined or ordered, and

expect others to feel under any obligation as a result of what we have done. We are urged to do things in peace and good order and that can be achieved by a common agreement among those fellowshiping, without the need for the imposition of an authority figure. Freedom, in all features of life, always constitutes a test of those participating in it, a test of their unselfishness and their devotion to right principles and ideals. It is only the failure to display these qualities that makes authoritarian control seem desirable as a remedy. Authoritarianism and control by rules may bring order, but they also cover over and mask the reality of what people genuinely are. Freedom allows their true qualities and attitudes to become manifest.[1]

Finally, in the matter of association itself we must acknowledge that, while the simplicity of the Scriptural principles is remarkable, the ensuing historical picture has been complicated. The Scriptures foretold the adulteration of the purity of the Christian community. They do not, however, set out a precise formula telling us how we today can identify some particular affiliation as THE one true religious fellowship with which to align ourselves. To the contrary, Christ Jesus assured us that the separation of the intermixture of genuine and false Christians in the world-field of wheat and weeds (or tares), and the placing of them into clearly defined categories, is something beyond human ability.[2] I am satisfied that that intermixture prevails in all denominations (that of Jehovah's Witnesses being no exception) and, in all probability, with the weeds often outnumbering the wheat. The separation and clear identification of them will become manifest only at God's day of judgment.

For those who have been moved by conscience to disengage themselves from a religious system, an obvious solution to their lack of association might seem to be simply to join some other religion. There are hundreds of denominations to choose from, all having a measure of truth and a measure of error, though the ratio of one to the other may vary. I personally have felt no inclination to align myself with any. It is not that I am looking for some affiliation that is totally free from error. I am satisfied that does not exist. I am quite sure that I myself am not free from all error and that no one else is either.

The fact that there are serious wrongs to be found within the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses does not suddenly make everything right in other religions. They, too, have serious problems which at times they candidly acknowledge. I am satisfied that many

1 Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 2:16, 17.
2 Matthew 13:28-30, 39-43.

religious organizations are less authoritarian than the one I left, that many allow for a fair measure of freedom of expression. There is today, in some respects, greater freedom to express difference even in the Catholic Church than exists in some of the smaller religions, that of Jehovah's Witnesses included.[3] This factor of reduced authoritarian domination would seem to offer a degree of advantage. Yet I know that membership in any of the denominations carries with it the expectance, at least, of acceptance and support of the particular teachings that distinguish that particular denomination from the others. Though denominational members may downplay the seriousness of the differences separating them from others—particularly when encouraging people to join—the initial formers of the denomination obviously considered those distinctive teachings as sufficiently important and serious to cause them to divide off from whatever previous affiliation they were part of. And the present leadership must view them as at least sufficiently serious to prevent a reuniting with that previous affiliation, or a uniting with yet some other.

In discussing the issue of our being either "servants of the spirit" or "prisoners of the organization," the British parliamentarian quoted in Chapter 15 sums up the moral of his points by saying:

> The moral is that, even when we are members of an organization, our attitude to it should be one of partial detachment. We must be above it even when we are members of it. We should join it in the knowledge that there we may have no abiding place. We should be weekly tenants, not long-leaseholders. We should accept no such commitments as would prevent our leaving it when circumstances make this necessary....The whole concept of 'my party, right or wrong,' 'my union, right or wrong,' 'my church, right or wrong,' should be utterly alien to our thinking.

Reviewing the world situation, former Roman Catholic theologian Charles Davis made this comment:

> Christians urgently need an adequate and appropriate social expression for their faith. I am thinking of the innumerable

3 This in no way implies that there has been any renunciation of claimed power by Papal authorities. While there is greater freedom of discussion, church officials are quick to react if any public statement is viewed as creating any doubt as to their authority and scope. As former Catholic theologican Charles Davis says: "Nowadays, as long as [a theologian] can remain within the realm of pure theology . . . it is increasingly less likely he will be disturbed. He has to be cautious, but the Church authorities are coming to know that there is little they can now do to control theological thinking. But touch a practical point, which need not affect the Christian faith itself but simply official policy or the established order, and there is uproar." (*A Question of Conscience*, page 236.)

> unattached Christians there are at present. People who in their essential outlook are Christians, who perhaps have professed the Christian faith in the past, but who simply cannot contemplate or have not been able to endure life within the present Churches. Having had no alternative manner of being Christians put before them, they have drifted away from the Christian faith. The faith of many of these people could be brought to maturity if they could be shown how to live and socially structure the Christian faith without imprisoning themselves within the obsolete structures of the existing denominations.…
>
> To continue to play the present institutional game within and across the present denominational structures is to hinder the coming into full visibility of a radically different and better form of Christian presence in the world. And it will be to watch an increasing number of people ceasing to profess the Christian faith because they identify it with the present Churches. They do not recognize that it is often the Christian faith that leads them to reject institutional structures inimical to the self-understanding and freedom of man and to Christian truth and love.[4]

He acknowledged that the majority of those professing Christianity today obviously are to be found in the denominational systems and that many are sincerely working within their framework. At the same time, he explained why he personally felt that a course of "disaffiliation" is nonetheless advisable, saying:

> Disaffiliation is required, because one must recognize that the existing social structures of the Churches are inadequate and obsolete. In so far as they can be made useful, they must be regarded as limited in function, relative in value and essentially changeable. The Christian should embrace his open situation and refuse to be enclosed in any total organization. Obedience to the Gospel and to the Christian community as a whole will frequently demand opposition to the claims, prescriptions and official attitudes of the existing Church institutions. This is not an invitation to individual license. The individual Christian will endeavor to ground his thinking upon the Christian tradition as a whole and will communicate with other Christians. But complete conformity to the official line of his Church is irresponsibility as a Christian.[5]

I do not pretend to be able to respond to requests by offering something that is "appealing" in the sense of what one might like in the way of affiliation and association. I think we each need to

4 *A Question of Conscience*, pages 237, 238.

5 *A Question of Conscience*, page 238.

meditate on the picture the writer of Hebrews draws in the latter part of his letter. He first describes how, after their blood was offered in sacrifice, the bodies of the sacrificial animals were taken outside the camp of Israel to be burned, and then says:

> Therefore Jesus also suffered outside the city gate in order to sanctify the people with his own blood. Let us then go to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured. For here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.[6]

What does it mean for us to "go to him outside the camp"? "Outside the camp" is here used as interchangeable with "outside the city." The first mention of a city in Scripture is with regard to Cain and revealed his lack of confidence in God's declaration that Cain's life was not to be taken by other humans. The city thus becomes representative of the quest for security by one's own means.[7] This same spirit soon surfaced in the post-Flood period, and the urge to build a city synthesized the desire for security by human means, along with the desire for the power and prominence the city offered.[8] The *opposite* viewpoint is presented as evidence of the faith of men like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, that they did not seek the protection of cities but lived in tents because of looking forward "to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God."[9] All this gives deeper meaning to the Christian writer's words that "here we have no lasting city, but we are looking for a city that is to come," a city that is described elsewhere as heavenly, the "Jerusalem above," the "city of the living God."[10]

While it is true that the world as a whole, and not merely its great cities, is symbolic of the human quest for security, power and prominence, the *context* of the words in the letter to the Hebrews would seem to place the focus on a more specific area, the *religious* one. Jesus was impaled "outside the city gate" and the city was Jerusalem, then the center of worship of God, a worship that under the old covenant could be called "organized worship." Today, worship by God's servants is not, or at least *should not be,* centered on one city of this world. Many may rightly claim that they are free from looking to any *literal* city to give them a religious sense of security, or as a source of power and prominence.

6 Hebrews 13:11-14, *NRSV*.
7 Genesis 4:13-17.
8 Genesis 11:1-9.
9 Hebrews 11:8-16.
10 Hebrews 12:22; 13:14; Galatians 4:25, 26; Revelation 21:1-7.

But since we do not "go to him [Christ]" by going outside a *literal* gate or outside a *literal* camp, the test is not as to our showing a willingness to look elsewhere than to a *literal* city for our security. Many of those to whom the letter to the Hebrews was addressed were not living in Jerusalem, and we, like them, are called to go *outside* the figurative camp.

Today we find a religious "establishment" that has developed, composed of many denominations. In a sense they are each individual "camps" and yet they compositely form a large "camp" of an organizationally structured, religious establishment. This is seen in that one generally gains recognition as part of that establishment by membership in one of the denominations composing it. Not to be part of that "camp," in one or more of its sectors, often means being viewed as an outsider, no matter how strong one's faith, or how great one's devotion is to God, or how intensely one strives to hold to unity with his Son.

On a more individual and smaller scale, new religious movements often start out rather "tentlike" in nature. Most, however, soon work toward city-like organization, one that offers the sense and appearance of security, that has size and, with it, power and—due to those factors—fairly wide influence. Today we have what are called "megachurches" with membership roles forming a population of thousands, with a departmentalized staff, building complexes and budgets that run into the millions of dollars—a veritable "city" in many respects. Literal cities, along with offering apparent security and ability to satisfy the preoccupation with social life, power and prominence, have their own evils, including the "reduction of the individual to members of the crowd."[11] A similar effect is seen in the figurative "cities" in the religious field. They provide the means for the few to attain prominence, but the larger they become the more the individual reduces to a mere supporter (a segment of the base for power). Intimate communication becomes less frequent, less likely, with the result that relationships become, not stronger, but weaker. Yet the natural human leaning is away from the "tents," and their apparent smallness and their lack of outward evidence of strength and permanence, and instead toward the "city" or "camp" and all that it appears to offer. Certainly pride would incline to find the "tents" unsatisfying, even irritating. Pride would maneuver in the direction of the "city" and its allure.

11 *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia,* Vol. I, page 714. This work also comments: "The coming city of God is defined by the presence of God, who is all in all. . . . This would be our primary 'urban identity,' implying that we reside as pilgrims and aliens in the other cities of the world. Our task is to be the 'city set on a hill' and a 'light of the world.'"

For the Hebrews to whom the exhortation was addressed, Christianity meant a willingness to go "outside the camp," at the cost of former associations and of being labeled as an outcast, not entitled to certain privileges of those "in the camp." Exclusion from the synagogue meant a cutting off of all existing social contacts.[12] But enduring this difficulty and seeming isolation would not isolate them from Christ—it would instead bring them *nearer* to Christ. Like Abraham and others they could show that they had here "no lasting city" but they looked for a city to come with eternal foundations.[13] This may mean a lack of recognition and may carry with it the sense of being transitory, "on the move," rather than nicely settled down, but it brings spiritual and eternal benefits that more than compensate and that can fill the heart.[14]

It would seem that accepting life "outside the camp" is one of the most difficult things for persons to face, perhaps no less difficult than for the Hebrews addressed back then. My expressions in this regard are not due to some simple aversion to the "city" aspect in the sense of a large structured religious organization, but because I sincerely believe that very valuable things are lost when we go back to the "camp." take up "residence" in any such "city"—primarily such things as the simplicity of brotherhood, the familylike spirit, the focus on the spiritual rather than that which appeals to the physical senses of eye and ear. I think it is reasonable to believe that humility is more likely to be genuinely nourished in the environment of the "tents" than in that of the "city." Distance from the "camp" never need bring a sense of distance from God, but rather can bring a heightened sense of closeness. That is why, after his call to follow Christ "outside the camp," the writer to the Hebrews immediately speaks of giving "a sacrifice of praise to God."[15]

What is here said is not an advocating of hermitlike isolationism. We all need to be related to others. We have an inner consciousness of this. Adulthood brings considerable freedom from the sometimes helpless dependence of childhood, but throughout life we need to recognize the value of association and cooperation, not solely as to the benefits we can receive but equally so as to those we can contribute to others. The question essentially is, how-

12 John 9:22; 12:42,43; 16:2.
13 Hebrews 13:15.
14 Employing a different analogy, author and educator John A. Shedd once said: "A ship in harbor is safe—but that is not what ships are for."
15 Hebrews 13:15.

ever, whether one's joining with others will result in a relationship that allows for the exercise of personal conscience and the right to act as a responsible individual, or whether it will instead call for the forfeit of these rights by a union that ultimately robs one of one's freedom and personal integrity.

In my own case, I have no wish to subscribe to any denominational creed. This is not due to an unwillingness to fraternize with people, nor is it an exaggerated concern for independence, nor because of any sense of smug self-sufficiency, or a Pharisaical unwillingness to risk being "contaminated" through association with those whose beliefs include some I view as in error. On the whole, I feel that I am perhaps less inclined to be judgmental toward them than they often are toward one another interdenominationally.[16] My feeling of openness is not toward the *systems* to which they are attached but toward them as *people*.

My remaining free from denominational ties, then, is not reflective of a purely negative or pessimistic outlook, but is primarily due to positive factors. It is because I believe I can be of *greater* service, *better* service, both to God, to Christ, and to my fellow man by not linking myself to some system, whether a single denomination or the multi-denominational religious "establishment" as a whole. I honestly consider that as more of an encumbrance than an improvement. Arguments that more can be done by being part of the system than separate from it do not convince me. The Scriptural record shows that the prophets operated essentially outside the "system," John the Baptist did, Christ himself did. And I do not believe that among Christians initially there was anything resembling today's religious "establishment" or institutionalized "system." The power of God and of his Son surely surpassed whatever *derived* power one might gain through organizational membership, even though the organization might be, as some religious organizations are, mammoth in size. I think that kind of power is largely illusory, for it carries with it its own limiting and restrictive conditions as requirements for membership, preconditions that weaken rather than strengthen the individual *as a person.* And I believe that it is *what we are as persons* that will ultimately mean the most in our efforts to be of benefit to others.

16 Protestantism, as an example, generally divides itself along a wide variety of lines—mainline, Reformed, evangelical, charismatic, fundamentalist, liberal, etc.—while within each of these broad divisions there are dozens of denominational lines producing further separation. Whatever unity is shown is often only in the form of token expressions. Competiveness is, unfortuntely, more often in evidence.

In my present circumstance, I appreciate feeling completely free to express an interest in any and all persons, of any denomination or of none, without being predisposed in favor of some versus others—and without them feeling that I am seeking to advance the interests of some denomination. There is no question that the majority of my contacts are with persons who either are or were affiliated with Jehovah's Witnesses. Yet this is not due to any lesser interest in other persons. It is simply the natural way things have worked out. My wife and I have, in fact, invited various couples among our neighbors to our home for a meal, people of differing denominational backgrounds, so as to get better acquainted. And in every case our conversations included spiritual subjects, not because we *contrived* to introduce them but because of our neighbors' normal interest in them. A Roman Catholic man from Italy has visited us and shared meals with us a number of times and I have found his visits always refreshing due to his clear concern for people and his personal interest in the Scriptures. I feel myself at the service of any of these persons and believe that any of them, on feeling the need, would feel free to call upon me for whatever assistance I might be able to give in a spiritual way, as well as in other matters of life.[17]

I believe that the first-century practice of meeting in homes for Christian association is as practicable today as then. I don't believe that it requires the presence of some notably knowledgeable individual, or of some "charismatic" type of person, to accomplish good. We do not have God's Son among us in person as people in the first century were privileged to have him. Nor do we have apostles among us. But we do have the words of God's Son, the record of his life, and the words of his apostles. Simply reading the Scriptures together and discussing what they mean for us can be a source of encouragement and strength. We have found that to be true in our own case.

There is, obviously, no mandate to meet *only* in homes. Nor is there any rule limiting gatherings to relatively small groups.[18] My personal preference for these features is based, not on some belief that we are obligated to do things precisely as they were done in the first century, but because of the *benefits* I see in such relatively small home gatherings. It would seem that the guiding factor should

17 We have also enjoyed having at least some persons of non-Witness background in attendance at a number of our gatherings in our home.

18 In some cases those sharing in home gatherings—former Witnesses and others not of Witness background—have numbered as many as sixty persons.

be whether the arrangement contributes to or detracts from the sense of family-like relationship, the simplicity that enables our focus to be on that which is spiritual, the sense of our gathering being a natural expression of a broader scope of Christian activity, an activity woven into the fabric of our normal course of life rather than distinct therefrom. I personally feel that those factors are enhanced by home gatherings and that they are often obscured in what are called "church services."

The question of baptism at times arises. There may be an inclination to think of baptism in the context of affiliation with some religious fellowship, as an event sponsored by, or even *authenticated* by, some such fellowship. To the contrary, it would be difficult to think of a more *personal* act than baptism. The account of the Ethiopian eunuch and his baptism alongside a road while on a trip illustrates this beautifully.[19] The act has nothing to do with becoming a member of some religious system but symbolizes one's publicly made confession of faith in God's Son and "an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ."[20] In Scripture, baptisms are not presented as programmed occasions, not even the baptism of thousands at Pentecost. They were not some pre-planned part of a "convention" program. They were spontaneously carried out as the occasion arose, and whoever was present did the baptizing.[21] There is, then, no reason why one must wait for special circumstances or a special occasion for baptism. A man might baptize members of his own household.

There is also the question of re-baptism. Certainly one's departure from a religious organization does not of itself require this, as if the baptism drew its validity—or lack of validity—from organizational membership. Since the act is so utterly personal, the determining factor is, what did your baptism mean to you at the time, what was in your mind and heart? To me it meant offering my very self to God through Christ on the basis of his shed blood. There was for me never any question that Christ was my Lord and Master. True, I was in a particular religious organization and supported it fully for many decades. But I did that because I believed that organization was genuinely serving God and Christ, was submissively obedient to them. When, in time, the issue came that made evident that I was faced with a clear choice, I felt no hesitation in making that choice, even though it meant ending one aspect of a religious heritage of three generations in length. It did not

19 Acts 8:26-39.
20 Romans 10:9,10; 1 Peter 3:21, 22.
21 Acts 9:17, 18; 10:44-48; 16:14, 15, 25-33.

end another aspect, the major one—for my Witness parents had never inculcated in me the belief that an organization came first, but always that God came first. I realize that with others this may not have been the case. They are obviously free to make their own decisions as to the genuineness of their motivation at the time of their baptism.

Some persons speak of their "becoming Christians" and "accepting Christ" after leaving Jehovah's Witnesses. That may perhaps be true in their case. In my own case it was precisely because of *being* a Christian and of *having accepted* Christ as my God-appointed Head and Master that I took the course I did. My separation from the Watch Tower organization did not result in my accepting Christ, but resulted from my having accepted Him many decades earlier.

Are Jehovah's Witnesses, then, Christians? Those asking that question generally mean, are they "true" Christians? Often the questioners have their own definition as to what constitutes such "trueness," definitions influenced by the creed to which they presently subscribe. My own answer would be that I believe about the same percentage among Jehovah's Witnesses are true Christians as in any other church. I know from my sixty years of acquaintance with them, including intimate association with the leading men among them, that many are genuinely interested in promoting the worship of God and are doing what they do because of believing that it does promote such worship. I believe that the *organization* itself manifests serious deviations from Christianity in its teachings and practices. And I believe those factors constitute definite impediments hindering a fuller, richer appreciation of the teachings of God's Word. They obscure to a measurable degree the relationship we should have with God and his Son, and restrict people in their making a full expression of the fruitage of God's spirit and of the love that is in their hearts. But I believe that impediments exist as well in the other denominational systems, though they may take different forms. And I do not believe that the impediments of themselves can prevent anyone from having a heart devoted to God and to Christ if one does not allow them to do so.[22] In time the unchristian aspects of an organization may cause these persons to face a choice that demonstrates where their true loyalty lies, where their actual faith rests. The genuineness of their Christianity will then be

22 My feelings here correspond to those expressed in *A Question of Conscience*, in which the author, former priest Charles Davis, writes: "When someone asks me what it felt like to be outside the Roman Catholic Church, I found myself spontaneously answering: it is as if I had rejoined the human race." I felt the same on disengaging from the Watch Tower organizaion. Yet David goes on to say, "I would not here be misunderstood. I have known great love and sincerity among Catholics. . . . I do not consider myself as cut off from Catholics as Christian people. I am not spurning Catholics as individual persons . . . I know them as very good people, but as struggling against heavy odds . . . within the confines of their Church."

evident. From one standpoint it would seem to their advantage if they come to a recognition of the reality of matters without needing some crisis situation to bring it home to them. And yet, to give any commitment a full test, in effect "going to the wall" with it, before ending the commitment as futile, can also have a maturing, sobering effect. It can be a valuable experience.

Just as we can quickly solve the problem of association by joining some denomination, we can quickly solve the problem of what to believe by adopting what is called "orthodoxy." The term itself is a fine one, coming from the Greek *ortho* plus *doxa* meaning simply "right teaching." Actually, it has come to stand for a set of beliefs that have been defined and established as a result of the various councils held in earlier centuries. Some of those beliefs are simply restatements of Scripture and are obviously "right teaching." Others are the result of interpretation, argumentation and debate, and have been pronounced "orthodox" by men in authority. As one source therefore puts it, "orthodox Christianity is something purely descriptive—referring simply to the majority opinion."[23] The "majority opinion" came from the vote of men who constituted what may properly be called "governing bodies" of the past.[24] My own intimate experience with a religious governing body gives me little cause to feel that the majority vote of religious leaders forming a governing body of the past necessarily gives any genuine strength for the acceptance of a certain belief. In my previous religious life, I found that persons all too often believed because "the organization" had spoken. I see no progress or improvement in now believing simply because "orthodoxy" has spoken, through the same medium of religious authority. Many today who are or become "orthodox" have become such by the same process of indoctrination and intellectual intimidation, and with the same lack of independent thought and critical analysis of argumentation that characterize so many within the Watch Tower movement. The mere fact that a belief has been long held—or gained wide acceptance in the past—may make it *traditional* but does not of itself make it *right*.[25]

I similarly see no true progress or improvement if persons make a 180-degree turn in beliefs but retain the same judgmentalism, dogmatism and self-righteousness that characterized them before

23 Dr. Bruce Shelley, professeor of Church History at Denver Seminary, in his book *Church History in Plain Languge*, page 62.

24 As has been shown, the term "synod," used to describe the religious councils, carries with it as one definition that of "a governing body." See page 58.

25 Compare Mark 7:1-8; Galatians 1:14.

their change in beliefs. We must worship God both "in *spirit* and in truth," and the spirit we manifest is that exemplified by God's Son, a spirit so opposite to that expressed by the judgmental, self-righteous, tradition-controlled Pharisees.[26] I have come to realize that a considerable portion of what I formerly believed had no sound foundation in Scripture. I believe I can honestly say that what I believe today I believe because of what the Word of God says and is not a carryover retained from my previous religion. Actually, disillusionment can easily produce a tendency to now view as suspect *any* understanding of Scripture simply because it corresponds to a belief previously held. However, I see no reason to *disbelieve* something simply because it is found in teachings within that religion. My former religion undeniably inculcated in me a basic respect for the Scriptures, a belief in the overriding importance of worship of and obedience to God, of the hope of life being bound up in the ransom sacrifice by Christ and his resurrection, of the sovereign authority expressed through his Kingdom. I would not want to discard these. True, it simultaneously undermined and vitiated the strength of much of this by its other teachings, yet not to the extent that the essential truths were robbed of all their power, as seen by the fact that those very truths led to my eventual disaffiliation.

I believe that many persons confuse certain views as being unique among Jehovah's Witnesses, or among what those persons call "cults," a term that, as one scholar observes, is all too often applied to any religion of which the individual strongly disapproves. They fail to recognize that, while differing (sometimes considerably) in detail, a similar viewpoint can be found in the writings of many respected theologians—even theologians accepted as meriting the designation "orthodox."

As one example, the common view among many of the human soul is described by S. C. Guthrie, professor of systematic theology at Columbia Theological Seminary (a Presbyterian institution), in this manner:

> According to this doctrine only my body can die, but I myself do not really die. My body is only the shell of my true self. It is not *me;* it is only the earthly-physical prison in which the real "I" is trapped. My true self is my soul, which, because it is spiritual and not physical, is like God and therefore shares God's immortality (inability to die). What happens at death, then, is that my immortal soul escapes from my mortal body. My body dies, but I myself live on and return to the spiritual realm from which I came and to which I really belong.

26 John 4:23, 24

Having said this, this theologian then goes on to state:

> If we hold to the genuinely Biblical hope for the future, we must firmly reject this doctrine of the soul's immortality for several reasons.

He then proceeds to detail those reasons from Scripture. As to the origin of the belief he first described, he states:

> This doctrine [of the soul's inherent immortality] was not taught by the biblical writers themselves, but it was common in the Greek and Oriental religions of the ancient world in which the Christian church was born. Some of the earliest Christian theologians were influenced by it, read the Bible in the light of it and introduced it into the thinking of the church. It has been with us ever since, influencing even the Reformed confessions (see the Westminster Confession, XXXII; the Belgic Confession, Art XXXVII).[27]

I present this here neither as conclusive nor as a view that all should accede to. To determine whether that viewpoint is convincing one would have to read and weigh the validity of his Biblical reasons, which I have not included. While one could find scores of other scholars who express the same viewpoint as this particular theologian, their numbers or their reputation is not decisive; one can similarly find theologians of repute who argue for a different, contrary view. My purpose here is not to argue the validity of the view expressed but solely to show that, though there might be the inclination to reject it out of hand as the product of "cult-thinking," there are in fact reputable scholars who express that viewpoint.

Similarly with the relation between the Father and the Son as revealed in Scripture. There is no question that deity is attributed to the Son, for the term *theos* is applied to him in certain texts.[28] What that deity *means* is ultimately the question.[29] Non-trinitarianism is a notable feature of the belief of Jehovah's Witnesses, though it is not limited to their religion. No orthodox scholar would support the views taught by the Watch Tower

27 *Christian Doctrine*, Shirley C. Guthrie, Jr. (1968), John Knox Press, Atlanta, pages 381-383.The author was professor of systematic theology at Columbia Theological Seminary, with doctorates from Princeton Theological Seminary and the University of Basel, Switzerland.

28 John 1:1, 18.

29 For example, a man shares *humanity* equally with his father, *full* humanity. They are both of the same nature. They are not of the same substance or being. The argument during the early centuries of the Christian era did not revolve around the issue of whether the Son was of the same *nature* as the Father, for his divinity was accepted. The dispute, which went on for centuries, often with great bitterness, was whether he was of the *same substance* or *being* (Greek *homoousios*) as the Father, or, instead, of *like* substance and being (Greek *homoiousios*)—See *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. IV, pp. 918, 919; *The Rise of Christianity*, W. H. C. Frend, pp. 538-541; *Jesus Through the Centuries.*, Jaroslav Pelikan, pp. 52, 53, 62, 63.)

organization with regard to the nature of Christ. I have no interest in defending those views, for I believe that some are defective. Does this conversely require acceptance of *traditional orthodox* teachings on the subject as "right teaching"?[31] The only reason why it should—or *could* in my personal case—is if clear *Biblical* support could be shown for it.[30]

There is no question that Watch Tower publications at times quote sources in a manner that does not fairly represent what the source was actually saying. Yet the fact remains that statements with respect to the origin and development of the doctrine under discussion have been made with such clarity that it would be difficult to misunderstand them. I here make quotations from two theological sources, both of them well known and respected. The quotations are not designed to contradict or refute the trinitarian teaching. Both sources are themselves trinitarian and what they present had no intent of refuting the doctrine. Were they not trinitarian, or were they less respected, I would not quote them at this point.

The first quotation is from the article on the "Trinity" found in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (1988 edition [a revision of the 1929 edition]), written by Cornelius Plantinga, Professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary. What I find notable about the article's statements is the degree of caution expressed, the frank acknowledgment of uncertainties. The article's introductory paragraph reads:

> Though "trinity" is a second-century term found nowhere in the Bible, and the Scriptures present no finished trinitarian statement, the NT does contain most of the building materials for later doctrine. In particular, while insisting on one God, it presents Jesus Christ as the divine Son in distinction from God the Father, and probably presents the Holy Spirit or Paraclete as a divine person distinct from both. Obvious problems admittedly attach to both claims; indeed "person" as a trinitarian (threeness) term has itself been controversial since Augustine [354-430 A.D.], and especially in the modern period. Still, the doctrine of the trinity does lie in Scripture "in solution" (B. B. Warfield, *ISBE* [1929], s.v.); i.e., the NT presents events, claims, practices and problems from which church fathers crystallized the doctrine in succeeding centuries. [31]

30 Reference works present the doctrine as basically built upon the Athanasian Creed and involving the use and understanding of such terms as "essence," "substance," "nature," "hypostasis," "person" (of which "nature" is the only term actually appearing in the Scriptures). The Protestant Reformation on the whole retained the doctrine as taught by the Catholic Church, but there have been some differences according to denomination. These revolve largely around the "incarnation" of Jesus and differing explanations as to how he could possess human and divine nature simultaneously (called the "hypostatic union").

31 *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1988, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Vol. IV, page 914.

It would be worthwhile to reread this paragraph, making note of all the qualifying expressions it contains. In its caution the material only asserts that the "building materials" for the doctrine are found in Scripture, not the existing doctrine itself, and that "church fathers crystallized" the "later doctrine."[32] The 'personality of the Holy Spirit' is said to be "probably" presented in Scripture. "Obvious problems" and continuing controversy, even regarding the use of the term "person" as describing three persons of the trinity, are similarly acknowledged. Though the encyclopedia article as a whole definitely seeks to demonstrate the validity of the doctrine, the same intermixture of caution and frankness appears intermittently throughout.

The information in this material is in no way unique. The second quotation illustrates more amply the "controversial" aspect of the doctrine "in the modern period." The quotation is from the internationally respected Swiss theologian Emil Brünner. He is trinitarian and in the following quotation from his book *The Christian Doctrine of God* (page 226), even speaks of 'God becoming man and enduring the cross.' Yet he also states the following:

> It was never the intention of the original witnesses to Christ in the New Testament to set before us an intellectual problem—that of the Three Divine Persons—and then to tell us silently to worship this mystery of the "Three-in-One." There is no trace of such an idea in the New Testament. This "mysterium logicum," the fact that God is Three and yet One, lies wholly outside the message of the Bible. It is a mystery which the Church places before the faithful in her theology, by which she hampers and hinders their faith with a heteronomy [that is, unlike autonomy, a *subjection to others*] which is in harmony, it is true, with a false claim of authority, but which has no connection with the message of Jesus and His Apostles. No Apostle would have dreamt of thinking that there are the Three Divine Persons, whose mutual relations and paradoxical unity are beyond our understanding. No "mysterium logicum," no intellectual paradox, no antinomy [apparently unresolvable conflict] of Trinity and Unity, has any place in their testimony, but only the "*mysterium majestatis et caritatis*": namely, that the Lord God for our sakes became man and endured the Cross. The mystery of the Trinity, proclaimed by the Church and enshrined in her Liturgy, from the fifth and sixth centuries onwards, is a pseudo-mystery, which sprang out of an aberration of theological thought from the lines laid down in the Bible, and not from the Biblical doctrine itself.

32 Other scholarly works on the subject use similar expressions to "building materials" such as the "seeds" or "germ (in the sense of germination)" of the doctrine, or the basic "lines" of the doctrine. These expressions all make evident that, in the view of those using them, *interpretation* was required to convert the "seeds" or "germ" or "building materials" or "lines" into an explicit doctrine.

As with the earlier quotations, I do not present this as a form of "proof" on a particular side of the issue of the validity of the trinity doctrine. The real proof rests with inspired Scripture not scholarly views. I present it because it is so often claimed that reluctance to accept what may be called orthodox or traditional trinitarianism is simply due to the person's ignorance of the original languages of Scripture (Hebrew and, particularly, Greek), or due to having been indoctrinated with a biased, one-sided view of religious history, or due to the person's understanding of certain texts being warped by a biased translation or interpretation of those texts. This Swiss Protestant theologian's command of the Biblical languages, the depth of his knowledge of religious history, of the writings of the Ante-Nicene period and of following centuries are beyond question. The same is surely true of his knowledge of the various arguments, pro and con, regarding the Biblical texts that figure in the trinitarian dispute. Yet he makes evident that his acceptance of the "mystery" of the triune-God doctrine is as a product of theological thought, not because of belief that the teaching is itself actually present in Scripture.[33]

Even as other quotations coinciding with Brünner's could be made, so could quotations contrary to his. I do not agree with all of his viewpoints. Verse-by-verse discussion of relevant Scriptures could be made and claims pro and con could be presented. That is not my purpose here. My intent here is not to argue against certain doctrines but against the dogmatism and judgmentalism that all too often accompanies them.[34] What I have quoted is solely to demonstrate that there are highly respected scholars who, though in no sense supportive of Watch Tower claims, do not view the questioning of the *Scriptural foundation* of this doctrine *in its*

33 Both before and after the quotation made, Brünner repeatedly refers to the doctrine as a "theological reflection," a creation of the Church, not a Biblical *kerygma* (proclamation). While expressing the belief that the "reflection" followed Biblical "lines," he repeatedly states that "speculation" played a strong role in the formation of the doctrine.—Pages 206, 217, 222, 226, 227, 236, 237, 239.

34 We have seen that "orthodox" has the basic meaning of "right teaching" but has come to stand for teaching bearing the approval of ecclesiastical authority. Similarly, "dogma" in Greek has the basic meaning of "what seems to be right," but has come to stand for a tenet or code of tenets approved by religious authority. "Dogmatism" stands for positiveness in assertion of opinion especially when unwarranted or arrogant. If a teaching is clearly taught in Scripture it warrants our acceptance as right teaching, true doctrine, something we can affirm and hold to with confidence. When such foundation is questionable, however, insistence on the teaching constitutes dogmatism.

traditional, orthodox form as the result of either ignorance or a cult-like mentality.[35] Of greater seriousness to me, it illustrates why I cannot sympathize with those who take a judgmental attitude toward others because such ones' view does not coincide with their own, with those on each side of the issue categorically denying that those on the other could possibly be Christian. I find it notable that, in contrast to the degree of moderation, caution and balance expressed by the sources already cited, often persons whose academic credentials are immensely inferior are among those most insistently dogmatic and judgmental on these same topics. I have no question that some of the arguments and reasonings they employ would be viewed as completely unworthy of consideration by those same scholarly sources. Whether we are learned or unlearned, I believe we must guard against dogmatism and judgmentalism, as indicative, not of wisdom and discernment, but of both smallness of mind and smallness of spirit and heart.

In summary, then, even as I am convinced that the one true religion is Christianity itself, not some religious system claiming to represent and exemplify it, I also believe that the truth is found in the Scriptures, not in any particular set of interpretations that men have developed or may yet develop. That truth is not only in the words themselves but also in the revelation they bring to us of God and of his Son. We will almost inevitably differ in our understanding on some points but, if governed by God's spirit, should have no great difficulty in agreeing on those teachings clearly and plainly stated.

Obviously, it would make for a much easier task if one could respond to requests for help by offering simple, quick solutions.

35 Brünner in fact expresses the view that such questioning has logical cause. He says, "The terms used in the Athanasian Creed, and from this source incorporated into the traditional doctrine of the Trinity taught by the Church, '*una substantia, tres personae*' [one substance, three persons], must sound strange to us from the outset. What room is there for the idea of '*substantia*' in Christian theology? Indeed, it represents that intellectual aberration which substitutes speculative and impersonal thinking for the line of thought controlled by revelation." (Page 227) He adds, "Even the idea of 'Three Persons' is to be regarded with misgiving. It is indeed impossible to understand it otherwise than in a tri-theistic sense, however hard we may try to guard against this interpretation." He thus makes evident that while it is easy to ***say*** that "each of the "Three Persons is God and yet there are not Three Gods but One," it is not possible to ***think*** in those terms, and efforts to do so in actuality result in thinking of three Gods. Later, speaking of the "stumbling block for thought" the doctrine can represent, he states, "It is therefore intelligible that it is precisely those theologians whose thinking is entirely controlled by the thought of the Bible who have had little sympathy with the doctrine of the Trinity. I am thinking of the whole school of 'Biblical' theologians."'(Page 238)

Many who have written to me evidently wanted that. Some want to be able to transfer from an organization of considerable size and power to another of at least some size and power. My replies must have been a disappointment to them. In those cases, they evidently looked elsewhere and I did not hear further from them.

It would be pleasurable to be able to do great things for others, to satisfy their wants and needs for them in a way that measures up to their expectations or wishes. I know that that is simply beyond my ability. I take comfort in Paul's parting words to a gathering of brothers in Ephesus when, after stating that he expected to see them no more and warning of the rising up of ambitious men who would distort the truth to attain their own ends, he said:

> And now I commend you to God and to his gracious word, which has power to build you up and to give you your heritage among all who are dedicated to him.[36]

I do not feel it is failing anyone to encourage them to put their heart trust, not in men or in human systems, but in God. To encourage them in the faith that requests to Him, made both explicitly in prayer and implicitly by the very life course we follow, do not go unheard, that answers come, and that we need to recognize that what our heavenly Father wisely gives us is what we genuinely *need*, not what we may simply have *wanted*. To believe that if we earnestly seek, with all the effort that searching can require, we will find what is truly worth finding. That if we keep knocking, being alert to opportunities for spiritual benefit to ourselves and service to others—not merely seeing the opportunities but making use of any and all that appear before us—then many avenues that are both rewarding and refreshing will open up to us.[37]

And, in harmony with Paul's expression quoted, I have full confidence in the *power* of God's graciously provided *Word*, his message, to stabilize, support, strengthen and build up those who take it into their minds and hearts. I cannot conceive of a loving Father who would not communicate his mind and will and promises to his children in a way that is available to all, not communicating just through certain favored of them to the others, but speaking to all, each one, with an equality of interest and love. That communication can be found in the Scriptures, available to be read

36 Acts 20:32, *NEB*
37 Matthew 7:7-11.

by all so that all are hearing the same essential message, and also by God's dealings with us personally through his Son in our daily individual life and its experiences as we act in response to that basic message. His Son exulted in the fact that his Father reveals himself not just to the learned and wise, the intellectual and the clever, but to the simple as well, to those with the uncomplicated, noncomplex nature of children.[38] If we tend to doubt that we have the needed strength or ability to accomplish God's will for us, we need to reread these words of Christ's apostle:

> Take yourselves for instance, brothers, at the time when you were called: how many of you were wise in the ordinary sense of the word, how many were influential people, or came from noble families? No, it was to shame the wise that God chose what is foolish by human reckoning, and to shame what is strong that he chose what is weak by human reckoning; those whom the world thinks common and contemptible are the ones God has chosen—those who are nothing at all to show up those who are everything. The human race has nothing to boast about to God, but God has made you members of Christ Jesus and by God's doing he has become our wisdom, and our virtue, and our holiness, and our freedom. As scripture says: if anyone wants to boast, let him boast about the Lord.[39]

Faith assures us that the power is there, power to sustain us through any problem, power to enable us to find solutions, to overcome obstacles in our Christian path, to keep us firm in our course until our inheritance is finally reached. The strength and wisdom we need is available; it is up to us to draw upon it. The climate of freedom into which Christ has introduced us, the whole *spirit* of his revelation, opens up the finest opportunities for doing this. It is ideal for allowing us to attain our goals of knowledge, of spiritual strength, of confidence, of life wisely, meaningfuly and, above all, lovingly spent, with the heritage of everlasting life in view. May we have the courage and faith to embrace, cherish and use to the full that freedom.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, with our unveiled faces reflecting like mirrors the brightness of the Lord, all grow brighter and brighter as we are turned into the image that we reflect; this is the work of the Lord who is Spirit.—2 Corinthians 3:17, 18, *Jerusalem Bible*.

38 Luke 10:21, *NEB; JB; LB*
39 1 Corinthians 1:26-31, *JB*.

Appendix

For Chapter 4

Pertinent sections of the affidavit submitted by Don Adams, assistant secretary-treasurer of the Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society of New York, in the Bonham, Texas, legal case. His reference to the Witness organization as "hierarchical" is found in section 6 of the letter.

AFFIDAVIT OF DON ADAMS

STATE OF NEW YORK)
) ss.:
COUNTY OF KINGS)

I, Don Adams, after being duly sworn, depose and say:

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2. I am the Assistant Secretary-Treasurer of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc., and, as such, I am familiar with the books, records, publications and operating procedures of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York, Inc. I have personal knowledge of the facts set out herein and I am a custodian of the official records and publications described herein.

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6. To implement their decisions, the Governing Body uses a hierarchial organization together with corporate entities, when appropriate, to accomplish its worldwide work of teaching and declaring the good news of God's established Kingdom. The principal corporation used by the Governing Body is the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. (See Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry, page 26.)

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and the Bonham Congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses, are entitled to the uninterrupted use and enjoyment of the Bonham Congregation Kingdom Hall located at 1105 Pecan Street, Bonham, Texas.

Respectfully submitted,

Don Adams

Letter submitted by the author to *Time* magazine, printed in the March 15, 1982 issue on page 7 of that publication.

Price of Doubt

Although I disagree with Raymond Franz's theological perspective, I applaud him for questioning human authorities [Feb. 22]. In an age of pastor worshipers, we are destined to repeat Jonestown unless someone stands up and asks "Why?"

(The Rev.) Eddy Keebler
La Crescenta, Calif.

My heart is hardly bleeding for poor put-upon Raymond Franz. Disfellowshiping is to be viewed as discipline intended to make an individual recognize the need to adhere strictly to the Bible for the sake of pleasing God. Whether or not Mr. Franz will be denied any hope of eternal life is in Jehovah God's jurisdiction.

L. Kirk Johnson
Crum Lynne, Pa.

I appreciate the factual approach in the article "Witness Under Prosecution." In connection with my being disfellowshiped from the Jehovah's Witnesses, I am quoted as saying: "There is no life outside the organization." When I said this, I was describing not my own feelings but the viewpoint prevalent among most Witnesses and implicit in the organization's teachings. My understanding from Scripture is that God's Son is, exclusively, "the way and the truth and the life."

As for the pain of disfellowshiping, I feel it, but my sentiments are best expressed in the words of Paul: "So now whom am I trying to please—man, or God? Would you say it is men's approval I am looking for? If I still wanted that, I should not be what I am—a servant of Christ" *(Galatians 1: 10).*

Raymond V. Franz
Gadsden, Ala.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR should be addressed to TIME, Time & Life Building, Rockefeller Center, New York, N.Y. 10020, and should include the writer's full name, address and home telephone. Letters may be edited for purposes of clarity or space.

For Chapter 6

The changes made in the *Commentary on the Letter of James* which are presented in Chapter 6 came about coincidentally. Discussion of the then-unpublished book's contents stemmed from objections by Governing Body member Fred Franz to the exposition regarding James 5:14, 15, made by Edward Dunlap, the writer of the commentary. These verses contain the exhortation to any Christian who is "sick" to call the elders, who are to pray over him, "greasing him with oil" in the Lord's name. Dunlap's presentation gave evidence that this most likely related to physical illness, whereas the Watch Tower Society's interpretation for long had limited it solely to *spiritual* illness, with the "oil" interpreted as referring figuratively to the 'soothing information found in the Scriptures.'

The president, Fred Franz, as a member of the Writing Committee of the Governing Body, had read the material when it was submitted to that committee, as had the other four members of the committee. In his written presentation of his objections, the president wrote (quoting from the original copy of his memorandum):

> This material should be corrected to eliminate the inclusion of physical sickness. Otherwise, elders in making "shepherding" calls on sick persons will have to carry along a bottle of oil for greasing purposes. Which brand of oil, olive oil, peanut oil, Russian mineral oil, or what specific kind of oil? Will the "shepherding" brothers have to grease and rub sisters who are sick? On what part of her body should they rub the oil?

His comments went on for several more sentences, but all in the same vein.

In reality the material submitted by Dunlap had dealt with the matter in a balanced and conservative manner, comparing the practice with the washing of feet which, while common in Bibical times as an act of hospitality, is not a practice today. The material suggested alternative ways elders might show equivalent concern and comforting care for a sick fellow Christian.

As I had been assigned to oversee the development of the commentary, I went to my uncle's office and discussed his objections with him. I particularly focused attention on the fact that ***the same Greek phrase*** for "rubbing with oil" occurs at Mark 6:13 and there clearly relates to actions toward persons *physically* ill. After considerable discussion, he told me to go to the other members of the Writing Committee, saying that if they were willing to accept the material he would not insist upon his objections being enforced. The other members, when consulted, were agreeable to the acceptance of the material and so it was sent to the Watch Tower's printing plant, typeset and printed in hundreds of thousands of copies.

Weeks later, toward the close of a Governing Body session, without previously having said anything to the Writing Committee (or to me personally), the president brought the matter up and gave a long presentation of objections, laying special emphasis on those already quoted. He said nothing to the Governing Body about his earlier expressions to me and his agreement to abide by the decision of the other members of the Writing Committee of which he was a part. I recall that Grant Suiter spoke up, saying: "Where is this material?" and on being informed by Lyman Swingle that it had been sent to the factory, Suiter continued, "Then I say let's get it back here and let's print the ***truth***!" Like the other members of the Body who were not part of the Writing Committee, Suiter had never *read* or even *seen* the material, but Fred Franz's presentation had been made and that was evidently enough for him to have made up his mind.

When copies of the material were obtained (taken from the hundreds of thousands of copies already printed), the Governing Body discussed the matter and discussion ended with the majority voting for a rewriting of the material to conform to the tradi-

tional view of the verses. Then some member, I do not recall now which one, brought up the discussion of the portions presented in Chapter 6 of this present work. The ultimate result is set forth there.

When the material was rewritten, the text at Mark 6:13 was not discussed, in fact not even listed. A quotation from the Schaff-Lange Bible commentary was employed, since it suggested a "symbolical construction of the passage," allowing for the application of James 4:14, 15 to spiritual illness. What the rewritten material did *not* state is that *the same commentary* went on to say that in Christian times the practice of 'rubbing with oil' was also likely carried out in a *literal* way. Since that statement, like the text at Mark 6:13, did not contribute favorably to the argument, it was not mentioned.[1]

For Chapter 9

Prior to the latest ruling on blood set out in the June 15, 2000 *Watchtower,* the then-existing policy is basically shown in the following chart:

Forbidden blood components and practices	Permitted blood components and practices
Whole blood	Albumin
Plasma	Immunoglobulins
White blood cells (leukocytes)	Hemophiliac preparations (Factor VIII and IX)
Red blood cells	Diversion of patient's blood through heart-lung machine, or other diversion where the "extracorporeal circulation is uninterrupted."[2]
Platelets	
Storing patient's own blood for subsequent transfusion	

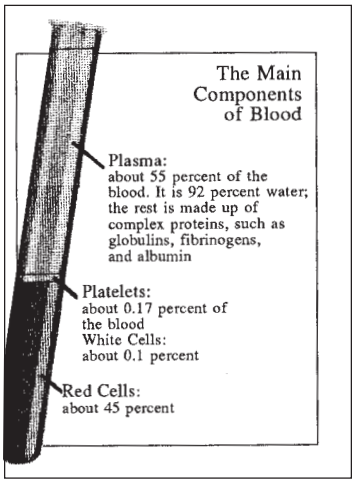
The organization thus categorized the elements in blood as either "major" components or "minor" components (the effect of this division appearing in the chart presented). This categorization of itself illustrates the arbitrary nature, as well as the inconsistency, of such rulings. Where had God granted to men authority to make such division? On what basis did they divide—simply on a certain percentage of the total, and if so, what is the cutoff point in percentage separating "major" from "minor"? Or did they do it on the basis of how vital a role each component plays? If so, how did they assess and determine the relative importance of such role?

1 See *Commentary on the Letter of James*, pages 199-203.
2 These positions are spelled out in the *Awake!* magazine of June 22, 1982.

In a personal conversation, even the former head of the Watch Tower headquarters' own medical staff, a licensed physician and surgeon, acknowledged the difficulty in classifying an element as "major" or "minor" in view of the fact that if a person needs a particular blood element to save his life then that element is clearly a 'major' one for him.[3] But the inconsistency actually goes much, much farther.

When the question is put as to why it does not forbid the use of *all* blood components, the Watch Tower Society has explained its policy changes allowing use of the listed blood fractions by saying that these are used in very "small quantities" and that this places their use within the realm of personal conscience. When this explanation is examined closely, however, one finds evidence indicating either ignorance of, or a concealing of, facts, facts so forceful that they expose the organization's position as meaningless. Consider :

The Watch Tower's strongly expressed statements against use of "whole blood" sound very impressive to many Witnesses. Though common in the 1950s and 1960s, such whole blood transfusions today actually are notably rare. In most cases, the patient is given the particular blood component he or she needs.[4] At the time of being donated, most blood is separated into a number of components (plasma, leukoctyes, erythrocytes [red blood cells], etc.). These are stored for future use. Most will be sent directly to medical facilities. In the great majority of cases, therefore, when a Witness is faced with the question of a transfusion the issue is not as to use of whole blood but of some blood component.



The inconsistency of the Watch Tower's policy as to acceptable and non-acceptable components is well illustrated in its policy as to plasma. As can be seen in the chart taken

3 Dr. Lowell Dixon nonetheless supported the Watch Tower policy and was author or co-author of an article published in *The Journal of the American Medical Asssociation* (November 1981 issue).

4 An inquiry to the Atlanta Red Cross on January 22, 1990, revealed that only about 6 percent of all blood donated there goes out to hospitals as whole blood, the other 94 percent being divided into component parts.

from the October 22, 1990 issue of *Awake!* plasma composes about 55 percent of the volume of blood. Evidently on the basis of *volume*, it was placed on the Watch Tower's list of banned "major components." Yet plasma is actually *up to 93 percent simple water*. What are the components of the remaining approximately 7 percent? The principal ones are albumin, globulins (of which the immunoglobulins are the most essential parts), fibrinogen and coagulation factors (used in hemophiliac preparations).[5] And these are precisely the components the organization lists as *allowable* to its members! The plasma is forbidden yet its principal components are permissible—provided they are introduced into the body separately. As one person observed, it is as if a person were instructed by a doctor to stop eating ham and cheese sandwiches, but told that it is acceptable to take the sandwich apart and eat the bread, the ham and the cheese separately, not as a sandwich.[6]

Leukocytes, often called "white blood cells," are also prohibited. In reality the term "white *blood* cells" is rather misleading. This is because most leukocytes in a person's body actually exist *outside the blood system*. One's body contains about 2 to 3 kilos of leukocytes and only about 2-3 percent of this is in the blood system. The other 97-98 percent is spread throughout the body tissue, forming its defense (or immune) system.[7]

This means that a person receiving an organ transplant will simultaneously receive into his body *more foreign leukocytes than if he had accepted a blood transfusion*. Since the Watch Tower organization now allows organ transplantations, its adamant stand against leukocytes, while allowing other blood components, becomes meaningless. It could only be defended by use of convoluted reasonings, certainly not on any moral, rational or logical grounds. The arbitrary splitting of the blood into "major" and "minor" components is also seen to be without sound basis. The

5 *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, Vol. 3 (1969), page 795; *The Encyclopedia Americana*, International Edition, Vol. 4, 1989, page 91.

6 Interestingly, the water, composing most of the plasma, freely "moves in and out of the bloodstream with great rapidity" and exchanges with water of the body cells and extracellular fluids. So it is never a constant component of the blood stream.(*The New Encyclopedia Britannica*, Macropedia, Vol. 15, 1987, pages 129, 131).

7 *The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Macropedia*, Vol. 15 (1987), page 135, points out that "Most of the leukocytes are outside of the circulation, and the few in the bloodstream are in transit from one site to another." To categorize them as a "major blood component" is somewhat like saying that passengers riding on a train are a constituent or integral part of the railroad system *personnel*. Dr. C. Guyton, in *The Textbook of Medical Physiology* (7th ed., Saunders Company, Philadelphia), page 52, explains that the main reason leukocytes are present in the blood "is simply to be transported from the bone marrow or lymphoid tissue to the areas of the body where they are needed."

organization evidently prohibits plasma—though mainly water—because of its volume (55% of the blood), yet it prohibits leukocytes which, as the *Awake!* chart shows, compose only about *of 1 percent* of the blood![8]

The absence of either moral or logical grounds for the position is also seen in that human milk contains leukocytes, more leukocytes, in fact, than found in a comparable amount of blood. Blood contains about 4,000 to 11,000 leukocytes per cubic millimeter, while a mother's milk during the first few months of lactation may contain up to 50,000 leukocytes per cubic millimeter. That is up to five to twelve times more than the amount in blood![9]

This leaves erythrocytes (red blood cells) and platelets remaining on the prohibited list. What of the *permitted* components?

A major factor to keep in mind is that the Watch Tower organization's argumentation seeks much of its support in provisions of the Mosaic law commanding that the blood of slaughtered animals be poured out, this being cited as though justifying the organization's objection to any *storing* of human blood.[10] Remember also that it presents the blood components it allows as constituting only *a negligible amount* of blood. Then consider these facts with regard to the components the organization classes as permissible:

One of these is **albumin**. Albumins are primarily used in connection with burns and severe bleeding. A person with third degree burns over 30 to 50 percent of his body would need about 600 grams of albumin. Watch Tower policy would allow this. How much blood would be needed to extract this quantity? There are about 45 grams of albumin in one liter of plasma. But only about 25 grams can be extracted from one liter of plasma. To get 600 grams of albumin, therefore, some 45 liters of blood are needed.[11] This is hardly a "small amount." It is also obvious that the liters of blood from which it is derived were stored, not "poured out."

8 The fraction is so small that *Awake!* makes no attempt to show it in the chart's test tube, and it is included with the platelets which, it may be noted, themselves constitute only about 2/10 of 1 percent of the total of the blood. They are also on the prohibited list.

9 *The New Encyclopedia Britannica, Macropedia*, Vol. 15 (1987), page 135; J. H. Green, *An Introduction to Human Physiology*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), page 16). On the amount of leukocytes in human milk, see Armond S. Goldman, Anthony J. Ham Pong, and Randall M. Goldblum, "Host Defenses: Development and Maternal Contributions," *Year Book of Pediatrics* (Chicago: Year Book Medical Publishers, Inc., 1985), page 87.

10 Genesis 9:3, 4; Leviticus 7:26, 27; 17:11-14; Deuteronomy 12:22-24.

11 This is a correction to the data shown in the first edition of this book.

Similarly with immunoglobulins (gamma globulins). To produce sufficient gamma globulin for one injection by syringe (a vaccination persons, including Jehovah's Witnesses, traveling to certain southern countries may take as protection against cholera) *close to 3 liters of blood* are needed as the source of supply.[12] *This is still more blood than is generally employed for a common blood transfusion*. And again, the gamma globulin is drawn from blood that is stored, not "poured out."

Hemophiliac preparations (Factors VIII and IX) remain. Before these preparations came into use, the average life span of a hemophiliac in the 1940s was 16.5 years.[13] Today, due to these blood-derived preparations, a hemophiliac may reach a normal life span. To produce preparations that could keep a hemophiliac alive over that period of time *would require extractions from an estimated 100,000 liters of blood*.[14] Even though the hemophiliac preparations themselves represent only a fraction of that total, when we consider their *source* we must ask how this could possibly be viewed as involving a "small amount" of blood?

The use of any of these blood components obviously implies *storage of large, even massive, amounts of blood*. On the one hand the Watch Tower organization decrees as allowable the use of these blood components—and thereby the storage involved in their extraction and production—while on the other they state that they are opposed to all storage of blood as Biblically condemned. This is the *sole basis* they give for prohibiting the use of autologous blood by a Witness (that is, the person's having some of his own blood stored and then returned to his blood stream during or following surgery).[15] Clearly, the positions taken are arbitrary, inconsistent and contradictory. It is difficult to believe that the formulators, and also the writers of explanations and defenses, of such policy are so ignorant of the facts as to fail to see the inconsistency and arbitrariness involved. Yet that alone could save the position from also being termed dishonest.

As regards the letter resulting from the conference in Jerusalem, it is a fact that some early Christians viewed it as binding in its prohibi-

12 One syringe contains about 2 milliliters of gamma globulin. This amount is extracted from 150 milliliters of plasma (in turn extracted from 270 milliliters of blood).

13 In 1900 it was only 11 years.

14 According to information from the Swedish pharmaceutical manufacturer Kabi Pharmacia, as much as 150 tons of plasma (extracted from more than 270 tons of blood) are needed for extracting 3 grams of Factor VIII. The true figure is probably much higher in most cases. The June 15, 1985, *Watchtower* (page 30) states that "each batch of Factor VIII is made from plasma that is pooled from as many as 2,500 blood donors."

15 The organization's position on this is spelled out, with much technical detail and reasoning, in the *Watchtower* of March 1, 1989, pages 30 and 31.

tions (including those regarding blood), and that position was taken by some men of the early centuries known as "Church fathers."

Their view must be weighed against the clear statement of the apostle Paul that "we are not under law but under God's grace [undeserved kindness, *NW].*" Are we justified in saying, in effect: 'not under law *with these exceptions*'? The new covenant in which Christians find themselves results in God's law being 'written within them . . . on their hearts.' (Jeremiah 31:33)

Jesus said that it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person but what comes out of the mouth. (Matthew 15:11-29; Mark 7:14-22.)

The "royal" or "kingly" law of **love** governs all the Christian's conduct. (James 2:8; compare Romans 13:8-10) The apostle Paul in his letters describes certain conduct, not as *unlawful*, but as not "fitting" and our Christian conscience should cause us to be sensitive in this regard. (Compare Romans 1:28; 1 Corinthians 11:13; Titus 2:1) As regards eating foods containing blood, I personally would scruple at doing so, not on the basis of a legal prohibition but out of simple respect for the fact that all life comes from God and the shedding of blood represents the taking of life. We must keep in mind also the apostle's assurance that "those who have doubts are condemned if they eat, because they do not act from faith, for whatever does not proceed from faith is sin." (Romans14:23)

For Chapter 13

In their teaching regarding two classes of Christians, the Watch Tower Society relies strongly on the account at Revelation chapter 7. They apply John's vision of 144,000, "sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel," to the "anointed class" or "spiritual Israel." Verses 9 through 17, which describe a "great crowd . . . out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues," are applied to an earthly class who are, in effect, "spiritual Gentiles." (See for example *Paradise Restored to Mankind—By Theocracy!*, page 80, paragraph 15.) It is of interest to compare the things said of this "great crowd" with Scriptural texts which the organization explicitly applies to the "anointed class" or that clearly relate to *heavenly* beings. That comparison reveals very similar or even identical descriptions. Here are some examples:

Applied to a "non-anointed earthly class"	Applied to an "anointed class" or to heavenly personages
Rev. 7:9: standing before the throne	Rev. 14:1, 3: a hundred and forty-four thousand . . . singing as if a new song before the throne . (Compare also Rev. 1:4; 4: 2-6, 10; 7:11; 8:3.)
Rev. 7:9: and before the Lamb	Rev. 5:8: the four living creatures and the twenty-four older persons fell down before the Lamb
Rev. 7:9: dressed in white robes	Rev.6:11: a white robe was given to each of them (Compare also Rev. 3:4, 18; 4:4.)
Rev. 7:14: These are the ones that come out of the great tribulation (the great oppression, *PME*; the great ordeal, *NEB*; the great persecution, *JB*)	2 Thess. 1:4, 7: all your persecutions and the tribulations that you are bearing. . . to you who suffer tribulation, relief along with us at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven (Compare also Rev. 2:9-11; 6:9-11; Matt. 13:21; 24:9; John 16:33; Acts 14:22; 1 Thess. 3:3, 4, 7.)
Rev. 7:14: washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb	Rev. 22:14: those who wash their robes . . . that they may gain entrance into the city [the New Jerusalem] (Compare 1 Pet. 1:2, 18, 19; 1 Cor. 6:11.)
Rev. 7:15: rendering him sacred service day and night in his temple (Greek, *naos*)	Rev. 11:1: measure the temple sanctuary [Greek, *naos]* of God . . . and those worshiping in it. (Compare Rev. 11:19; 14:15, 17; 15:5-8; 16:1, 17. The Greek word *naos* is used in every one of these texts and clearly relates to the "sanctuary," never to an earthly "courtyard of the Gentiles." The Watch Tower Society acknowledges that the sanctuary of the temple pictures God's heavenly realm. It consigns the "other sheep" to an earthly "courtyard of the Gentiles." Note also that Revelation 11:2, says that this courtyard is to be "cast . . . clear out."

With regard to the 144,000 in this chapter of Revelation, the account speaks of these as "sealed out of every tribe of the sons of Israel," 12,000 out of each of the 12 tribes (verses 4-8). Watch Tower publications view the "sons of Israel" to be such, not in a literal, but in a *figurative* sense, as part of a spiritual Israel. They view the 12 "tribes" similarly, not as literal tribes but as *figurative* tribes. In view of that, any selecting "twelve thousand" persons out of twelve "tribes" could likewise not be literal, but *figurative*. The question then is, how can the addition of all these *figurative* elements produce a *literal* total or sum, namely a *literal* 144,000? The Watch Tower Society's argument is that since the "great crowd" is described as one that "no man was able to number," hence indefinite as to number, then the 144,000 must be a definite and literal number. Yet when explaining the significance of the "twenty-four older persons" referred to in related passages of Revelation, they state that this figure of 24 is not literal but is symbolic of the full number of those who reign with Christ in heaven. (See Revelation 4:4, 10; 5:8; 11:16; 19:4. See also *Revelation—Its Grand Climax At Hand!*, page 77.) In Revelation there are references to the 7 spirits (1:4), the 7 stars (1:16), the 10 days (2:10), the 24 thrones and 24 elders and 7 lamps (4:4, 5) the 4 living creatures (4:6, 7), the 7 horns and 7 eyes of the Lamb (5:6, the fourth part of the earth (6:8), the 4 angels and the 4 corners of the earth (7:1), the third part of the trees, creatures and rivers, etc. (8:7-12), and many, many other numerical figures employed, which are presented in Watch Tower publications as being, not literal, but *figurative*, symbolic. Why then should not the 144,000 be viewed in the same light?

For these reasons some understand the 144,000 to be a symbolic number representing an ideal figure, the complete sum of all those who become spiritual Israelites, no matter how many they may prove to be. The "great crowd" could, in such case, simply represent the same ones, but seen from the viewpoint of the *reality*, the fulfillment of the symbolic ideal represented by the 144,000.

For Chapter 14

On the next page is shown the letter referred to in the footnote on page 501 written by Professor George Howard of the University of Georgia to Rud Persson. It relates to the proposed re-dating of the Chester Beatty Papyrus No. 2 (P46) and the effect of this on Professor Howard's theory as to the appearance of the Tetragrammaton (YHWH) in the Christian Scriptures.

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION

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July 8, 1988

Mr. Rud Persson
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Dear Mr. Persson

Thank you for your letter of 29 June regarding the redating of P^{46} to the latter part of the first century. If Kim's dating is correct it would show that in a Pauline MS of the first century the Tetragram was not used as I suggested. This weakens my theory, at least in regard to the Pauline letters. Whether or not first century manuscripts of the gospels and other writings would follow the pattern of P^{46} would still be a matter of conjecture. We can only hope that first century MSS of these writings turn up as well. A close look at P^{75} and P^{66} shows that they are not far behind in date to P^{46}

Sincerely,

George Howard

George Howard
Professor

GH/zpm

P.S. The Jehovah Witnesses have made too much out of my articles. I do not support their theories.

For Chapter 18

On pages 667, 668, reference is made to the Watch Tower organization's intense emphasis on expansion in material properties and building. Following are some additional details:

The Watch Tower Society in the United States has built up an enormous real estate holding. In the Brooklyn Heights area they have constructed several multi-storied residential buildings, have additionally purchased most of the area's main hotels (the Towers Hotel, the Standish Arms Hotel, and the Bossert Hotel), recently paid $6 million for a "sliver building" (26 stories high but only 22-1/2 feet wide), and own factory buildings covering more than half a dozen entire city blocks. In a nearby section (Vinegar Hill) of Brooklyn they have begun demolition for construction of another residential building of 30 stories. In upstate New York in the county of Ulster alone they own other land and property valued at

more than $80 million. Near the town of Patterson, New York, they have purchased 684 acres of land and are constructing a multimillion-dollar complex that will include the Watch Tower's Gilead School and also a 150-unit hotel (to be named the Patterson Inn). Combined together, these vast holdings, and the thousands of staff workers employed or housed in them, cannot but create a strong visual impression on Witnesses who visit them. The temple complex in Jerusalem would seem remarkably tiny by comparison, its cost, paltry by comparison. While not so enormous, very large properties and building complexes have been developed in other major countries of the world.

A former Witness, who for some years supervised the Brooklyn plant's pressroom operation, at one point calculated the organization's cost of printing the *Watchtower* and *Awake!* magazines, and came up with a cost of between three and three-and-a-half cents per copy. When he left the headquarters in 1980 and did managerial work for a printing plant in Pennsylvania, he asked them to quote their price for doing the same printing in the same volume. The company obviously did not have the benefit of volunteer workers. Their employees lived in their own homes and earned normal wages. Yet the company's quoted price *was almost identical to the Society's cost*. And with that amount they could not only pay their employees' salaries, but could *also make a profit!* Thus, the Watch Tower's benefit of volunteer workers is, from an economical standpoint, nullified. This inefficiency may be a by-product of the organization's insistence on modeling their operations on a closed community—with all the housing, feeding, cleaning, and maintenance involved, and the large personnel required to care for this.

On pages 689, 690 evidence was presented as to the manner of selecting elders in Bibical times. The Christian Scriptures also speak of the selection of others under the term *diakonos*, meaning simply *servant, helper or assistant*. (See, for example, 1 Timothy 3:3-12.) The pattern discussed on the pages referred to with regard to elders may also apply to those serving as helpers in the Christian congregation. When, following Pentecost, a problem developed regarding food distribution, the apostles saw the need for other persons to care for the matter and called *on the Christian community as a whole* to select from among themselves seven men of "good reputation," who manifested God's Spirit and also wisdom. (Acts 6:1-6) The apostles said they would "appoint them to this task" (*NAB*), or, as some less formal translations read, "We will turn this responsibility over to them" (*NIV*), "we will hand this

duty over to them" (*JB*), which they did, accompanying this by prayer and placing their hands upon the selected men. Once again, we have here a special circumstance and the presence of apostolic authority, and there seems to be no need to view this as designed to establish a standardized, formalized ordination ceremony to be in force in all future entrusting of responsibilities of helpers and assistants. Paul in one case speaks of Stephanas and his household as having '*given themselves* to the service [*diakonian*] of God's people,' and he urges others to appreciate, recognize and similarly put themselves at the service of any who do this. (1 Corinthians 16:15-18 *JB, PME, NEB*). The community did not "ordain" them but is called on to recognize the value of their service. It is the *work* of such persons, not some office, that calls for community appreciation, respect and cooperation. (Compare Romans 16:1, 2.) And this is true of *all* who serve in whatever capacity.—Compare 1 Thessalonians 5:12, 13.

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On June 2, 2010, Raymond Victor Franz died at 88 years of age.

His wife Cynthia Marie Franz died on December 29, 2013, at 78 years of age.

2010

2013

Raymond & Cynthia with Muchacho in the late 1990s.

On their 50th Wedding Anniversary in 2009.

Jehovah God and his son Jesus the Anointed One love you.