

MY BELOVED RELIGION — AND THE GOVERNING BODY



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The picture on the front cover shows some buildings of Jehovah's Witnesses in Brooklyn, New York.

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ABBREVIATIONS

JW: Jehovah's Witnesses.

GB: The Governing Body.

LXX: The Septuagint translation.

NWT50: New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures (1950).

NWT84: New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures with References (1984).

NWT13: New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, revised 2013.

GB: The Governing Body.

JW: Jehovah's Witnesses.

THE NAME OF GOD

In connection with the name of God, there is strong Hebrew and Akkadian evidence in favor of the pronunciation *ye-ho-wa*. However, in this book I use the Latinized form "Jehovah."

INTRODUCTION

This book is not an attack on Jehovah's Witnesses. On the contrary! My beloved religion is the religion of Jehovah's Witnesses. And I have invested my whole soul in this religion for 60 years. However, the book represents a strong correction of those who have been members of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses in the 21st century.

During all my years as a Witness, I have never experienced anything bad, and my cooperation with my fellow elders and fellow Witnesses has been based on mutual love. I have also had a good personal relationship with all the leading brothers at the Norwegian branch office. Therefore, my book is not a personal vendetta against the GB or some kind of revenge. I am certain that the members of the GB are sincere persons who want to serve God, and I accept that a worldwide organization must have leaders. I believe that Jehovah's Witnesses today, led by the present GB, is Jehovah God's organization. But I am very sad because a great number of decisions made by the GB have caused great harm and loss for tens of thousands of Witnesses. If there is no change, other tens of thousands of Witnesses will experience the same bad things in the future. And on behalf of all these, I have written this book.

In the spring of 1965, I started as a circuit servant (circuit overseer), and four years later, there was a course for circuit servants at the branch office. N. H. Knorr, who was the president of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, sent a message to us. He wrote: "If you see something in the organization that is wrong, or if you have a suggestion as to how something can be done better, do not hesitate to send a letter." We were also encouraged always to be courageous. Even if the situation was difficult, we should never shrink back. But we should take the necessary steps that were required, even if that would negatively affect us personally. (Psalm 15:4)

While the GB has done a lot of good work, they have also caused severe problems for tens of thousands of Witnesses. The easiest thing for me to do would be to look the other way and say nothing. But in my work as an elder, I have tried to follow Knorr's advice and never shrink back. I have sent several letters to headquarters, including most of chapter 4 in this book about higher education, and I have pointed out errors in the literature. I do not know if my letters have reached the GB. But if they

have, they have been ignored. Because the errors I will point out are related to the very core of the organization, I now take the unprecedented step of writing this book.

The fundamental problem is that in 1972 when the elder arrangement was implemented, the organization was theocratic, but during the 50 years since then, the organization has gradually been transformed into an autocratic organization, where the decisions and the words of the GB can no longer be questioned.¹ This is a situation that contradicts the Bible! I do not question the sincerity of the members of the GB. But it seems to me that they are held captive by their belief that they are chosen by God as a spiritually elite group designated as “the faithful and discreet slave,” and that they have been appointed over Jehovah’s Witnesses as their government with unlimited power.

Chapter 1 shows that the basic doctrines that are unique to Jehovah’s Witnesses have a solid biblical basis.

Chapter 2 demonstrates that the GB’s power basis is wrong and that the words in Matthew 24:45–47 about the faithful and discreet slave do not relate to a small group who gives spiritual food during Christ’s presence. But the words relate to individual Christians, who are like a literal faithful slave in Bible times who gave the other slaves literal food at the appointed time, and who are on the watch and faithfully carrying out their Christian responsibilities when Jesus comes as the judge in the great tribulation.

Chapter 3 demonstrates that there was no ongoing, sitting governing body in the first century CE and that there was no arrangement in the first Christian congregations that even comes close to resembling the Governing Body of JW today. During a short time, the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem took the lead among the Christian congregations. But the one who governed the Christians was Jesus Christ. (Colossians 1:13)

The situation today can be illustrated with some information given in a court case in California in 2012. The background of this case was that three elders in the Menlo Park congregation in the USA were removed as elders.

1. Definition of “autocratic”: “Controlled by one leader who has total power, and who does not allow anyone else to make decisions.” (Cambridge Dictionary; <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/autocratic>).

They took the issue to court, and Calvin Rouse, the counsel of JW, said according to the court transcript:

And I say “organization.” I am general counsel for the National Organization of Jehovah’s Witnesses out of Brooklyn, New York. Ordinarily, I wouldn’t be here, but this is one of our 13,000 congregations in the United States. We are a hierarchical religion structured just like the Catholic Church. And when the order from the Pope comes down in the church defrocking a priest and kicking him out, he no longer has any say in any matter in the local parish priest [sic.] -- in the parish. The same is the situation here.²

The apostle Paul wrote to Titus that he should make appointments of elders in city after city. (Titus 1:5) Those elders were appointed by other elders who reviewed their qualifications and not by a vote from the congregation members. This was the arrangement in the first Christian congregations. And this arrangement has been followed by JW. However, the real problem that is illustrated by the words of Rouse is that *the whole organization* today, also in every other aspect than the appointing of elders, is structured like the Catholic Church and is hierarchical and autocratic. Today the members of the GB have all power in connection with the doctrines, the assets, and the money. No one has the right to question their decisions or their words.

The first traces of an autocratic organization were already seen 30 years before Rouse uttered his words. This is seen in the letter “To all circuit and district overseers” from Watchtower Bible and Tract Society INC, dated September 1, 1980, said:

Keep in mind that to be disfellowshipped, an apostate does not have to be a promoter of apostate views... Therefore, if a baptized Christian abandons the teachings of Jehovah, as presented by the faithful and discreet slave, and persists in believing other doctrine despite scriptural reproof, then he is apostatizing. Extended, kindly efforts should be put forth to readjust his thinking. However, if, after such extended efforts have been put forth to

2. The Superior Court of the State of California in and for the County of San Mateo. Case No. CIV508137, February 2012, page 4. In a court case in Bonham, Texas in 1986, between Jehovah’s Witnesses and elders who were trustees of the Kingdom Hall but who were replaced by the Watchtower Society, Don Adams, who was the president of Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York Inc., wrote an affidavit where point 6 says: “To implement their decisions, the Governing Body uses a hierarchical organization together with corporate entities.”

readjust his thinking, he continues to believe the apostate ideas and rejects what has been provided through the 'slave class', then appropriate judicial action should be taken [= disfellowshipping].

The fallacy of the claims made in the letter — that not believing every teaching the GB sets forth amounts to apostasy — is seen by the fact that “the slave” has interpreted the same biblical subjects differently at different times. But each interpretation is called “the teachings of Jehovah.” For example, nine different interpretations of the meaning and references of the Greek word *porneia* (“sexual immorality”) and eight different interpretations of gambling as a disfellowshipping offense are found in the Watchtower literature. And in connection with each new interpretation, a Witness must not only accept it but also ‘*believe it,*’ at the threat of being disfellowshipped.³

The autocratic procedures and requirements collide head-on with the words of Paul in Galatians 5:1 (NWT13):

For such freedom Christ set us free. Therefore, stand firm, and do not let yourselves be confined again in a yoke of slavery.

To a great extent, in the congregations, the individual Witness today is not “free,” because, in many situations, the viewpoints of the members of the GB overrule the consciences of the Witnesses. And the GB has made hundreds of human commandments that have no basis in the Bible. One example of the power that the members of the GB have given themselves can be seen in a letter to the Hospital Liaison Committees in 2018 regarding blood transfusion. The situation is as follows: JW do not use tobacco, and they will not eat blood or take a blood transfusion. However, there are situations when a Witness can come into contact both with tobacco and blood. A Witness who is working in a supermarket can be asked by a customer to find a package of cigarettes or a piece of black pudding (also known as blood sausage) for him. Because this is only a small part of the job of the Witness in the supermarket, the conscience of most Witnesses will allow them to find the tobacco or the black pudding.

There is a similar situation at a hospital. The job of a nurse who is a Witness is to care for the patients and give them the medicines that are

3. See the articles “Sexual immorality (*porneia*)” in the category “The eleven disfellowshipping offenses” and “Gambling — changed viewpoints and subjective judgments” in the category “Reversed view of disfellowshipping offenses” on www.mybelovedreligion.no.

prescribed by the doctors. In some situations, the doctors may prescribe a blood transfusion, and the nurse is asked to administer this transfusion. To do that or not will be based on the conscience of the nurse. To administer a blood transfusion is a small part of the job of the nurse, and therefore, her conscience may allow her to do what the doctor has asked her to do.⁴ The letter of June 15, 2018 changed this situation:

We would like to inform you of an updated policy with regard to whether a Christian may administer a blood transfusion if he is directed to do so by a superior. The previous policy was that it would be a matter for a personal, conscientious decision whether to obey such an order. However, after carefully reviewing the matter, the Governing Body has determined that administering such a transfusion is so closely linked with an unscriptural practice that one unquestionably becomes an accomplice in a wrong practice. Therefore, it would not be appropriate for a Christian to administer a blood transfusion under any circumstance.—Gen. 9:4; Acts 15:28, 29.⁵

This letter shows that the members of the GB believe that they have the right to dictate new ‘policies’ to the Witnesses when they find it convenient and even overrule the consciences of individual Witnesses. But this is an attack on the Christian freedom that Paul mentioned in Galatians 5.1. No elder has the right to annul Jehovah’s “policy” of Christian freedom firmly established in the Scriptures.

The Governing Body requires absolute obedience from the Witnesses. If a Witness is not obedient to the GB, or if a Witness does not believe a new interpretation of a biblical subject, he may be disfellowshipped. This shows that the GB has dictatorial powers.

In 1971, a study of the Biblical meaning of “elder” and “overseer” was presented to N. H. Knorr, the then president of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, and to the vice president, F. W. Franz. They were humble men, and they accepted the conclusions of the study. Because of this, Knorr and Franz agreed that they no longer had the power as

4. Several nurses have told me that they have no problems with administering a blood transfusion, because it is a part of their job, and the transfusion is not prescribed by them. But Witness doctors or Witness nurses will not prescribe a blood transfusion. Moreover, the Jews could not eat the meat of an animal that was not bled, but they could sell this meat to a non-Jew.

5. This new policy was also communicated to the congregation members.

leaders of the organization, and a governing body was formed for the first time. In my view, there is again a need for a major structural, organizational change that includes the removal of the militant side of the organization. We need to get rid of the present autocratic system and go back to the theocratic arrangement that existed in 1972. There is also a need for an independent group of elders to review all the human commandments that the GB has invented and to remove those that are not based on the Bible, and which have caused untold harm for individual Witnesses. I will discuss two groups of human commandments in this book.

Chapter 4 deals with higher education. There are tens of thousands of young Witnesses who have been pressured not to pursue higher education, which would have benefitted them and their families in their future, particularly in countries with a high unemployment rate and after the Corona crisis. And many others have left their congregations, never to return, because they know that much of what the GB has said and written about higher education is not true but is a caricature of reality. Others who are studying at a university or a college have left because their congregation has been influenced by the extreme view of the GB, and they have felt that they no longer were welcome in the congregation.

Chapter 5 is particularly important because I discuss disfellowshipping offenses. To be disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation is a very strong measure, and so the apostle Paul says that only those who are *wicked* (1 Corinthians 5:13) deserve to be removed from the congregation. In 1 Corinthians chapters 5 and 6, Paul is not discussing which *actions* are disfellowshipping offenses. But he describes *personalities*, that is, persons who are permeated by particular evil actions and who therefore are wicked and deserve to be removed from the congregation. The eleven disfellowshipping offenses that are mentioned in the Christian Greek Scriptures are discussed, as well as the 37 disfellowshipping offenses that are invented and introduced by the GB.

Chapter 6 discusses the true regime of disfellowshipping, and it is shown that most of the procedures in connection with judicial cases that have been introduced by the GB contradict a number of Bible principles. The basic conclusion of this chapter is that only persons who are permeated by one of the 11 disfellowshipping offenses that are based on the Bible must be disfellowshipped. This means that no member of the congregation who has committed sins, regardless of how serious they are

and how often they have been committed, but who has changed his course and say that he has asked Jehovah to forgive him, must be disfellowshipped from the congregation.

Chapter 7 is also essential because it discusses the new view of the Bible now held by the present GB. The view that originated in the 1870s and that was upheld by the Bible Students and Jehovah’s Witnesses for 120 years was that every word in the Bible is inspired by God, all nuances are important, and every account is included with a particular purpose.⁶ Bible interpretation means to analyze the original text of an account in order to find its meaning.

The members of the present GB no longer support this view. They believe that the nuances and subtleties of the text of the Bible are not important. This is shown by the idiomatic and interpretative Bible translation NWT13 (published in 2013). They claim that a large number of accounts that were taken as prophetic types are actually non-prophetic. The consequence for the Watchtower literature is that 38 books and hundreds of articles in *The Watchtower* are just bogus; the prophetic applications in these are fiction. The result for the text of the Bible is that many accounts in the Hebrew Scriptures, such as the Song of Solomon, have no meaning in themselves; they are just “filling material.” They are only included to uphold the broad picture and give some basic moral advice. A new subjective method of Bible interpretation has been introduced as well: In a high number of cases, the GB does not ask about the meaning of an account in the Bible based on linguistic analysis, i.e., the meaning Jehovah intended the Bible account to convey. But they ask about what a given account *reminds* the GB of. And so not the account itself, but its *reminders* — what the account conjures in the minds of the members of the GB when they read it — are presented to the readers as “spiritual food”. This is a highly subjective approach that leads to allegorical interpretations.

For example, the perimeter wall of the temple in Ezekiel’s vision (Ezekiel 42:20) “*reminds us* that we must never let anything corrupt our worship of Jehovah.” And the lofty outer gates and the inner gates *remind us* “that Jehovah has high standards of conduct for all who would engage in pure worship.” (*Pure Worship of Jehovah—Restored at Last!*, page 152) There

6. The view is not that God dictated every word. The writers chose the words while they were borne along by holy spirit. (2 Peter 1:21, NWT84)

is, of course, no relationship or natural association between “walls” and ‘not corrupting our worship,’ or between “gates” and ‘high standards of conduct.’ These are typical allegorical explanations.

I am very much concerned with this new view of the Bible and the new method of interpretation because they undermine the very inspiration of the Bible, as it has been taught by the Bible Students and JW for 120 years.

Chapter 8 discusses how it was possible for the organization to go from being theocratic to becoming autocratic. And it presents some important conclusions.

THE PRESENT SITUATION AND THE PAST ONE

If a Witness studies the Bible with a Catholic man, and the man leaves the Church and becomes a member of a JW congregation, the man becomes a part of an organization that is more hierarchical and more dictatorial than the Catholic Church. This is a situation that violates several Bible principles. If a Catholic man became a Witness in 1972, when the elder arrangement was implemented, he would become a part of an organization that cherished Christian freedom for all—an organization that in all important areas was the diametrical opposite of the Catholic Church. The Watchtowers of November 1, 1946 and February 1, 1952 condemn an organization structure like the present one.

THE MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNING BODY WILL NOT LISTEN TO OTHERS

If someone does something wrong to you, you should approach him with love and consideration, trying to solve the problem. If the person does not listen, you can bring other persons into the situation. (Matthew 18:15-17) I have followed this principle in connection with the GB.

The Governing Body received the book, and the members were informed that if the basic problems discussed in the book could be settled inside the organization, the book would not be published.

The GB has refused to communicate with me, and therefore, the book has been published.

I will close this introduction by quoting a few lines from an E-mail that I received from one of Jehovah’s Witnesses on July 17, 2021:

I thank you again, for your efforts to help others understand the underlying truths of why the beautiful worship of Jehovah the true God has changed drastically! — I was at Brooklyn Bethel for almost 2 decades. I know of everything you mentioned and it is true.

THE RELIGION OF THE BIBLE

—REVIEW—

According to 2 Timothy 4:3, 5, and 1 Timothy 3:15, there is only one true religion. The scriptural requirements for being the true religion are only fulfilled by Jehovah's Witnesses. They believe that the whole Bible is God's inspired Word (John 17:17), they preach the Kingdom of God worldwide (Matthew 24:14), and they do not take part in wars or take sides in political matters. (John 17:14) No other religion fulfills these requirements.

Some doctrines of JW are found in other religions, but many doctrines are unique to JW. This chapter contains a detailed analysis of some of these unique doctrines.

Two different hopes of salvation. Hebrews 2:5 and 3:1 speak about "the coming inhabited earth" and "the heavenly calling." The number of those with a heavenly calling is found in Revelation 7:4 and 14:1, and Romans chapter 11 shows that spiritual Israel has a finite number ("the full number").

The name Jehovah. God's name was used by the first Bible Students in the 1870s, and it is still used by JW today. There is strong evidence that God's name was written in the original manuscripts of the Christian Greek Scriptures, and therefore, the use of the name in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Greek Scriptures in the *New World Translation* is justified. The form "Yahweh" is used by many. But Hebrew phonological rules show that this form is impossible. There is much evidence suggesting that the original pronunciation was "Yehowa."

Abstaining from blood. Blood represents life and is holy. The only legitimate use of blood was as a sacrifice on the altar. After Jesus had sacrificed his flesh and blood, there was no legitimate use of blood any longer. The law in Acts 15:28, 29 says that we should abstain from blood. JW takes the texts of the Bible in a literal and absolute sense if the context does not indicate otherwise. There are no exceptions in Acts 15, and therefore, JW abstain from all applications of blood, including medical use.

The Kingdom of God. According to Psalm 110:2, Jesus would sit at the right hand of God until his enemies were placed as his footstool. According to Hebrews 10:12, 13, this had not yet happened as of the writing of that epistle. Revelation was written at the end of the 1st century CE, and the book describes events that would occur in the future. Revelation 12:9–12 shows that Satan would be thrown out of heaven "a short time" before he was thrown into the abyss. At the beginning of this "short time," the Kingdom of God was established, according to the text.

The appointed times of the nations. Jesus showed that his followers would understand his great prophecy (Matthew 24:32–34). This includes “the appointed times of the nations” mentioned in the parallel account (Luke 21:24). Several times in his great prophecy, Jesus referred to the book of Daniel. The only place in the Septuagint where the Greek word *kairos* (“appointed time”) is connected with specific numbers is in Daniel. There is both a linguistic and a thematic parallel between Luke 21:24 and Daniel 4:10–17, and therefore, the seven appointed times logically are identical with the appointed times of the nations. The seven times represent 2,520 years with the starting point in 607 BCE. This means that the appointed times of the nations ended in 1914 CE and then started “the short time” countdown before Satan would be thrown into the abyss.

Prophetic periods in the time of the conclusion. The periods of 1,260, 1,290, 1,135, and 2,300 days would be fulfilled in the history of the people of God. There are particular events in the history of JW since 1914 that may be fulfillments of these prophetic periods.

The restoration of all things. We are looking forward to the time when the paradise will be restored on the earth. (Acts 3:20, 21) Persons living today may survive the coming great tribulation, and they may live in the restored paradise forever.

Before I discuss the religion of the Bible, I will say something about myself. As a person, I am just one of the servants of Jehovah, and I am not important. But my background and my experience may have some importance in connection with my analyses of the Bible and the organization of JW.

MY FAITH AND MY BACKGROUND

When I was a child, my mother and grandmother regularly attended the meetings of a Pentecostal congregation. They taught me that the Bible was the inspired word of God. As a youngster, I had great respect for the Bible. But I did not read the Bible nor attend the meetings of any religion.

When I met Jehovah’s Witnesses at the age of 18, I soon realized that they preached the truth because I believed in the Bible, and they used the Bible. I had just started to study at a technical school to become an engineer. But I quit school, and six months after my baptism, I started as a full-time minister. I continued in this service for 15 years until I had to stop because of my wife’s declining health.

When we stopped our full-time service, my wife and I settled in Oslo, Norway. I now had the opportunity to do something I always had

wanted, namely, to learn New Testament Greek. Without being a student of the college there, I was allowed to participate in all the lectures for one year. Nine years later, by accident, I came in contact with the teacher of Biblical Hebrew at the University of Oslo. I still was not a student. But I was allowed to participate in all the lectures for one year. My secular work gave me some physical problems, and so I had to change my occupation. I saw my possibility at the University, and I got my *Magister Artium* degree in Semitic languages in 1995, and my *Doctor Artium* degree in Semitic languages and culture in 2004.⁷

After I had completed my *Magister Artium* degree, I started to teach Semitic languages at the University of Oslo. I have studied 12 ancient languages, and I have taught courses in seven of these: Akkadian, Aramaic, Ethiopic, Hebrew, Phoenician, Syriac, and Ugaritic. The other five languages are Arabic, Greek, Latin, Middle Egyptian, and Sumerian. I have also taken an exam in applied linguistics (translation). I have written two books on ancient chronology related to the Bible, three books on Bible translation, two books on the Classical Hebrew language, and four books on different Biblical subjects. I have also translated many documents from Semitic languages and Sumerian into Norwegian and English.

Each of the eleven books I have written has primarily been written for myself and my own faith. Because of my nature, and my training in the philosophy of science, I am a skeptical person. To believe something, I need to get to the bottom of the issue and find the real evidence. This is what I have done in connection with the books that I have written.

My secular education and my 60 years as a Witness have greatly enhanced my belief in the Bible and our Creator. When we settled in Oslo, in addition to Greek, I studied historical geology, biology, and chemistry to test the information in the creation account in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. I made a very detailed study of the living cell, and the complexity of each cell shows clearly that life must have been created by a living being. This strengthened my faith in God.

I was very interested in understanding the original text of the Bible. And my doctoral dissertation was based on an analysis of all the 80,000

7. The *Magister Artium* degree required one more year of study compared with the American Master of Arts degree. The *Doctor Artium* degree required two more years of study compared with the American Ph.D.

verbs in the Hebrew Bible, the Dead Sea Scrolls, Ben Sira, and the old Hebrew inscriptions. The verbs were studied in their contexts, and this study took ten years.⁸ This study strengthened my faith in the Bible as God's inspired word.⁹

There are three subjects that are particularly important for our belief in the Bible: 1) Is the creation account in Genesis scientifically correct? 2) Do we have evidence for a worldwide flood less than 4,400 years ago? and 3) Was the book of Daniel written in the sixth or the second century BCE, and does it contain genuine prophecies?

The book of Daniel contains sayings about the future. Most scholars believe that these sayings are history in prophetic disguise and that they were written after they happened. I have done extensive studies on the different issues related to the book of Daniel. And in 2017, my book *When Was the Book of Daniel Written? A Philological, Linguistic, and Historical Approach* (331 pages) was published. It contains evidence supporting its writing in the sixth century BCE, and that it contains real prophecies.

Most scholars believe that the creation account and the accounts about the worldwide flood are myths. Over the years, I have done many studies and gathered much material dealing with these subjects. And my early studies in historical geology and related subjects have been of great help. The result of these studies is the book, *Can We Trust the Bible? With Focus on the Creation Account, the Worldwide Flood, and the Prophecies* (2019). It is in Epub format, has 1,500 pages and 1,100 photographs. It contains much evidence supporting the creation account as a real historic and scientific account, and that a worldwide flood really occurred a few thousand years ago. The three mentioned books give strong support to my belief that the whole Bible is the inspired Word of God.

My background as a Witness is as follows: I started as a circuit servant (circuit overseer) in the spring of 1965, and when the elder arrangement

8. In connection with the chapter on higher education and whether this education prevents one from taking a full part in the congregation activities, I would like to stress the following: While I was a student, and later when I became a university teacher, I was presiding overseer and coordinator in a congregation of 120–140 members. The hours I used to preach the good news was more than three times as high as the average in the congregation, and I was a very active member of the Hospital Liaison Committee. We did not have a TV in our home.

9. My dissertation is entitled: *A New Understanding of the Verbal System of Classical Hebrew An Attempt to Distinguish Between Semantic and Pragmatic Factors* (506 pages; 2004).

was introduced in 1972, I was the circuit servant in the Oslo circuit. It was my duty to be the chairman of the discussions in each congregation regarding who was qualified as an elder. From 1972 to 1974, I served as the district overseer for the whole of Norway, and I gave talks at the circuit assemblies. In connection with each assembly, I spent one week together with the circuit overseer, serving one congregation in the circuit. My task was to discuss the congregations in the circuit and how the elder arrangement was working. A two-week course for all elders in Norway started in 1974, and I was appointed to be the instructor of this course. During the 30 courses that I instructed, I came in close contact with the elders, and I got firsthand knowledge of how the congregations were functioning.

The history of JW in Norway appeared in the Yearbook of 1977. I spent a few months at the branch office in 1972 when the history was written. I was given the task of reading all the documents in the branch archives, including all the letters from headquarters, in order to look for something that could be used in the history account. At the end of 1975, we had to stop our full-time service because of my wife's declining health. We settled in Oslo, and for 35 years, until the end of 2010, I was presiding overseer and coordinator in a congregation of between 120 and 140 members.¹⁰ Because of this experience of mine, I have seen the development of the organization from the inside. And I have seen how the organization has developed from being theocratic to becoming autocratic.

DEALING WITH THE BIBLE IN AN INTELLIGENT WAY

When we approach the Bible, we should keep in mind that in this book, there are two kinds of material. First, we have the kind of material where everything we need to draw conclusions is found in different places in the Bible. In this case, we need to gather all this material together and make a synthesis of it. Second, we have the kind of material where only half of what we need is found in the Bible, and we must find the other half

10. During the 35 years, there was a break in my position as the presiding overseer. A pioneer who had finished the Pioneer Service School came to our congregation. I stepped down as the presiding overseer to let him get more experience in theocratic matters. Twelve months later, when he was sent to another congregation, I again became the presiding overseer.

ourselves — its application or fulfillment in the real world. This particularly includes the prophecies about the future.

Obviously, the second kind of material is much more problematic than the first kind. Jesus Christ uttered several prophecies about the last days and his coming as the judge. Through the centuries, many persons have tried to apply these prophecies to events in their days. Many of these were sincere truth-seekers. But they erred because these prophecies could only be understood when the time of the conclusion (end) had arrived. When we distinguish between the kind of material that we study, we will deal with the text of the Bible in an intelligent way.

Keeping in mind the two kinds of material in the Bible will help us when I present some of the beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses below.

THERE IS ONLY ONE TRUE RELIGION

The first question we must ask is: Can there be more than one true religion? The apostle Paul answers the question in 2 Timothy 4:3, 4 (NIV).

³ For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴ They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

According to Paul, there is only one right thing, “the truth,” “the sound (or, ‘healthful’) doctrine.” This truth would not suit the desires of most people. Therefore, they would listen to teachers who said what they liked to hear. The result would be that they would believe in myths rather than the sound or healthful doctrine. That there is only one true church or congregation is also shown by Paul in 1 Timothy 3:15 (NIV):

If I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. and it is “the pillar and foundation of the truth.”

The word “church” is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which most often is translated by “congregation.” There is only one “congregation of the living God,” and it is “the pillar and foundation of the truth.” If we believe that the Bible is inspired by God, there is only one possible conclusion to draw: Of all the churches or congregations with different doctrines and different practices, only one can be the true

congregation of the living God — the one founded on and in support of “the truth”.

The same doctrine, that there is just one “church” or “congregation,” is found in the Hebrew Scriptures. In the book of Daniel, we find the expression, “the people of the holy ones of the Most High.” (Daniel 7:27, NJB) In the last chapter of Daniel, we read that his prophecies dealing with the time of the conclusion (end) would be sealed until this time. (Daniel 12:10–12) The angel who spoke with Daniel, also showed that God would have a congregation of people. We read:

He raised his right hand and his left hand to heaven and swore by him who lives forever, ‘A time and two times, and half a time; and all these things will come true, once the crushing of holy people’s power is over.’ (12:7, NJB)

It is obvious that if the power of the holy people should be crushed after a certain time, the holy people would have to be a tight-knit group that could be distinguished from all other groups, and who could thus be identified and targeted.

A symbolic beast is described in Revelation chapter 13. This beast “was given authority to act for 42 months,” which is the same three and a half times (years) mentioned in Daniel 12:7, during which time it would “wage war against the holy ones and conquer them.” (Revelation 13:5, 7, NWT13) Indeed, the dragon would “wage war with the remaining ones of her [the symbolic woman mentioned in 12:1–2] offspring, who observe the commandments of God and have the work of bearing witness concerning Jesus.” (Revelation 13:17, NWT13)

The references above show that there is only one group targeted, one true religion, which is a tight-knit group that can be identified in contrast with all other peoples. But who are they?

HOW CAN WE IDENTIFY THE TRUE RELIGION?

The following points will serve as an identification of Jehovah’s Witnesses as the only true religion:

ACCEPTING THE WHOLE BIBLE AS GOD’S INSPIRED WORD

All Christian denominations more or less use the Bible. But only one of them accepts the whole Bible as God’s Word, which implies the belief that everything in the Bible is right in a scientific, historical and factual sense.

There may be some smaller groups, for example, in the Bible Belt in the USA, where all the members believe that the Bible is God's word. But the true religion must have many members because it must be represented all over the world.

Jehovah's Witnesses believe that every word in the Bible is inspired by God and that every account is included with a purpose.¹¹ This includes accepting that the first two humans were created about 6,000 years ago. This belief is based on the complete genealogy of Jesus Christ in Luke 3:23–38 and the age given to each person in Genesis. It also includes the belief that the creation account in Genesis, chapter 1, is scientifically correct, and that there was a worldwide flood when the whole earth was covered with water less than 4,400 years ago. Moreover, it includes the belief that in the near future, God will intervene in the affairs of man. He will remove all the nations on the earth, and he will make this earth a paradise where humans can live forever.

However, as I demonstrate in chapter 7, those who are members of the GB in the 21st century have taken some reservations regarding the full inspiration of the Bible. But most other Witnesses believe in the full inspiration of the Bible.

PREACHING GOD'S KINGDOM WORLDWIDE

In his great prophecy about his future presence and his coming as the judge at the end of his presence, Jesus spoke to his true followers, using the pronoun "you" in the plural. (Matthew 24:4, 33) One side of the composite sign of the presence of Jesus is found in Matthew 24:14 (NIV):

And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

The only denomination that fulfills this prophecy is Jehovah's Witnesses. In 2020, 8,695,808 Witnesses used 1,669,901,531 hours to preach the good news of the Kingdom. This preaching occurred in 240

11. Chapter 7 shows that during the last ten years, the present members of the Governing Body have developed a new view of the Bible, where its full inspiration is not upheld. This is one of the issues that I criticize. But for 120 years, the Bible Students and JW have believed in the full inspiration of the Bible. Most Witnesses today believe in the full inspiration of the Bible as well.

lands and 241,994 persons were baptized.¹² This represents an enormous preaching campaign where the good news of the Kingdom is spread systematically in every country.

In other Christian denominations, the priests preach from their pulpits in their churches and other buildings. But there is no other religious group where every member is a preacher, who is participating in a worldwide preaching campaign.

NOT BEING A PART OF THE WORLD (JOHN 17:16)

The Greek word translated by “world” is *kosmos*. This word can refer to the whole human family whom God loves (John 3:16), but it can also refer to the human family outside the true Christian congregation. This last reference must apply in 17:16 because Jesus says that “the world” would hate his followers — the true Christian congregation. (John 17:14)

When Satan tempted Jesus, he showed him all the kingdoms of the world and said according to Luke 4:6 (NIV), “for it [the world with its nations] has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to.” Jesus spoke about Satan as “the prince of this world” (John 14:30 (NIV), and Paul called Satan the “god of this age.” (2 Corinthians 4:4, NIV) The apostle John wrote, “the whole world is under the control of the evil one.” (1 John 5:19, NIV) The only conclusion we can draw from these passages is that all the governments and institutions of this world are influenced by Satan the Devil. That does not mean that the individual members of the governments are wicked. Most of them are sincere persons who try to do good. But to establish world peace, give all humans enough food to eat, solve the problem of the climate, and treat all races as equals, is impossible because Satan has and will maintain the control of the whole world until God’s Kingdom intervenes and creates a paradise on the earth.

The data and the conclusions summarized in the last paragraph are very radical, and that may be one reason why most members of the Christian denominations do not believe in all the words of the Bible. We remember Paul’s words that are quoted above, “they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will

12. <https://www.jw.org/en/library/books/2020-service-year-report/2020-grand-totals/>.

turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.” (2 Timothy 4:3, 4, NIV)

What does it mean not to be a part of the world? Paul speaks about himself and his fellow Christians, “We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors.” (2 Corinthians 5:20, NIV) An ambassador in a foreign country will follow the laws of the host country, and JW work hard to keep the laws of the respective countries in which they live, in adherence to Romans 13:1–7. But an ambassador will not be a part of the armed forces of the host country. And JW are the only large group of people in the world where everyone refuses to do military service. This is another identifier of the true Christians, for Jesus said, “By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:35, NIV) When members of the same Christian denomination fight against each other in a war, they show that they do not love each other and are not disciples of Jesus.

An ambassador also will not take part in the politics of the host country, and JW are the only large group that is politically neutral in every country, and who do not vote for any particular political party. Not to be a part of the world also means that individual Witnesses do not have the aspirations and goals of the world, for example, to become rich and influential. The Witnesses are not in any way ascetics. They live normal lives; they like good food; they appreciate having spare time and vacations. And from what they are on the outside, they cannot be distinguished from other people. But they are careful not to get entangled in any pursuits of the world that contradict Bible principles. And they look forward to the time when God creates a paradise on the earth.

The points discussed above show clearly the difference between JW and other Christian denominations. And they identify and authenticate the Witnesses as the only true religion.

THE UNIQUE DOCTRINES OF JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES

I have already mentioned the two kinds of material in the Bible, the material where all we need is found spread around in the different books, and the material where only half is found in the Bible, and we must find the other half ourselves, i.e., its application or fulfillment in the real world. The first relates to basic doctrines and the second to prophecies.

The first Bible Students in the 1870s came from different denominations with different beliefs. The reason why each one united with the Bible Students was that they discovered that their respective religions did not follow the Bible, and they wanted to learn the truth from the Bible. The group took one teaching at a time, tried to find what the whole Bible said about each teaching, and then they would draw their conclusion.

In 1965, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society published the book, *Make Sure of All Things; Hold Fast to What is Fine*. It contains an overview of the basic doctrines of JW, and which Bible passages that can be used to defend these doctrines. When we compare the contents of this book with the contents of *Zion's Watchtower* from the 19th century and C. T. Russell's six volumes of *Studies in the Scriptures*, we find most of the doctrines of the *Make Sure* book in the writings of Russell and *Zion's Watchtower*.

The other kind of material, where only half is found in the Bible, created more problems for the Bible Students. In a way, they had to start from scratch. This means that they had to take as a point of departure the understandings of the prophecies already established by other religions up to that point. And so, to consider and test these understandings would take much more time than to simply start from scratch in establishing the basic doctrines of the Bible.

Moreover, an angel said to Daniel that “the final part (*’ahΩ^αricǣt*) of these things” (of his prophecies) would not be understood before “the time of the conclusion (end).”¹³ (Daniel 12:9, 10) I will later argue in favor

13. In Daniel 12:8, NWT13 and many other translations have the rendering, “What will be the outcome of these things?” NWT84 has the rendering, “What will be the final part of these things?” This is a better rendering. The basic meaning of the word *’ahΩ^αricǣt* is “end.” But it can also refer to the result of something. In Daniel 8:19, it refers to “the final part of the denunciation”; in 8:23, it refers to “the final part of their kingdom”; in 10:14 it refers to “the final part of the days”; and in 11:4 it refers to “his posterity.” In construct (a genitive relationship), *’ahΩ^αricǣt* refers to *the final part*. In 12:7, it has a genitive relation to “these things” (*’ellǣœ*). What are “these things”? In 12:7, we are told that when the dashing of the holy people comes to an end, “all these things (*kol’ellǣœ*) will come to their finish.” And the expression “all these things” refers to what is described in 11:1-45 and 12:1-3 and possibly to other prophecies as well. Thus, “these things” (*’ellǣœ*) in 12:8 must also refer to 11:1-12:3. Therefore, Daniel’s question must be what the final part of “these things” in 11:1-12:3 and other possible prophecies will be. Daniel is told in 12:4 to “close up the words and seal the scroll until

of the view that “the time of the conclusion” started in the year 1914 CE. If that is correct, Russell and the Bible Students could not understand Daniel’s prophecies regarding the last things, regardless of how sincere they were and how much time they used for Bible study.

I have used the *Make Sure* book in my preaching work for many years, and based on my Bible study, I agree with all the doctrines in this book. In what follows, I will discuss some doctrines that are unique to JW and show why I believe in these doctrines.

I have studied Christian doctrines for 60 years, a large portion of this time focused on the original languages of the Bible, and there is no doubt in my mind that the only group (religion) that has doctrines entirely based on the Bible is JW. This confirms one of the keys to the understanding of prophecies, namely the identification of “the holy people.” Below I will give examples of the Biblical foundation of the faith of JW.

TWO DIFFERENT HOPES OF SALVATION

No other religion believes in all the same doctrines as JW. But singular doctrines similar to one or more doctrines of JW can be found in other religions. But there is one JW doctrine I have never seen duplicated in any other religion, the doctrine that based on the ransom sacrifice of Jesus, a group of 144,000 will reign with him in heaven, while billions of mankind will live as humans in the restored paradise on this earth.

What is the basis for this doctrine? Both in the Hebrew Scriptures and in the Christian Greek Scriptures, there are references to new heavens and a new earth. But the future destiny of persons serving God is not directly connected with the new heavens and the new earth in these texts. There are also passages that, in connection with the future, refer to houses, vineyards, and animals (Isaiah 65:21–25), and there are passages that refer

the time of the conclusion.” This must refer to the words in 11:1–12:3 and other possible previous prophecies, and not to the whole book of Daniel.

In his great prophecy, Jesus referred to the book of Daniel several times. In Matthew 24:15–16, Jesus says that when his followers saw the abomination causing desolation standing in a holy place, they should flee to the mountains. Luke 21:20–21 shows that the abomination was the Roman armies. This shows that Daniel 9:27, where the abomination was mentioned, should be understood. And it shows that the 70 weeks, that also are mentioned in chapter 9, and other prophecies that were fulfilled before the time of the conclusion (end) should be understood.

to heavenly life. (Phil. 3:20) But because heaven and earth are referred to in different passages, these passages cannot be used as proof for the doctrine that two different classes will be saved, one in heaven and one on earth. To prove that we need passages where both groups are mentioned at the same time, or where the context of two passages clearly shows that there are two classes.

The heavenly calling and the coming inhabited earth

The two classes that will be saved:

“the coming inhabited earth” (Hebrews 2:5)

“the heavenly calling” (Hebrews 3:1)

Later in the book of Hebrews, the two different hopes, one for the coming inhabited earth and the other for heaven, are clearly contrasted based on the intrinsic quality of the two hopes, and so are expressed from a different point of view. (11:39, 40, NWT13)

³⁹And yet all these, although they received a favorable witness because of their faith, did not obtain the fulfillment of the promise, ⁴⁰ because God had foreseen something better for us, so that they might not be made perfect apart from us.

The expression “all these” refers to all the faithful servants of God who lived in the past, who are mentioned by name or referred to in chapter 11. The pronoun “us” must refer to the brothers of Jesus who will rule with him in heaven. This hope is better than the hope of the coming inhabited earth. But both groups will become perfect together. This is the same as is seen in Hebrews, chapters 1 and 2, and it corresponds to Paul’s words in Ephesians 1:10 that the things in heaven and earth will be gathered together in Christ.

“Known before the founding of the world”

According to Luke 11:50, 51, the foundation/founding (*katabolē*) of the world (the human family) was laid at the time of Abel when children were born to Adam and Eve. Hebrews 11:11 confirms that *katabolē* is connected with the procreation of children. Ephesians 1:3 and 2:6 show that the hope of the members of the Ephesus congregation was heavenly.

In connection with the distinction being made between the two hopes — the heavens and the earth that are mentioned — there are two crucial

words. One is the preposition *pro* (“before”) in Ephesians 1:4. These Christians with a heavenly hope were chosen “*before (pro)* the founding of the world.” We may compare these words with Jesus’ illustration in Matthew 25:31–46 where two groups of persons that will be saved are mentioned, the brothers of Jesus and the sheep who do good to them. The identity of these brothers is not mentioned. But in connection with the sheep, it is said in verse 34 that they will inherit the kingdom that is prepared for them “*from (apo)* the founding of the world.” Because the aforementioned Ephesian Christians with a heavenly hope were chosen “before” the founding of the world, whereas the kingdom of the sheep was prepared “from” the founding of the world, the Ephesians and the sheep must belong to two different classes that will be saved. The brothers of Jesus that are mentioned apart from the sheep naturally belong to the same heavenly class as the brothers of Jesus with the heavenly calling that are mentioned in Hebrews 2:11,13; 3:1.

The sons of God and the creation

In Romans, chapter 8, the children, or sons of God, are mentioned several times. The children are said to be heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ (v. 17), and Jesus is the firstborn among many brothers (v. 29). These brothers are the called ones, declared righteous, and glorified. This relates only to persons with the heavenly hope.

Romans 8:19 (NWT13) says: “For the creation is waiting with eager expectation for the revealing of the sons of God.” Two different groups are mentioned, the “sons of God” and the “creation.” Because the sons of God are heirs of the kingdom, they have a heavenly hope. Verses 20 and 21 says: “For the creation was subjected to futility . . . on the basis of hope, that the creation itself will also be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of the children of God.”

The creation could rightly entertain the hope that, at last, they too would be set free from the corruption of which all sinners have been enslaved. The creation is not said to be the children of God. But they will have the glorious freedom *of* the children of God, not *as* the children of God. So again, we read about two different groups and two different hopes.

Unity in Christ in heaven and on earth

I have already shown that the Christians in Ephesus had the heavenly hope and that they were different from the sheep in Jesus' illustration in Matthew chapter 25. The two classes are mentioned in Ephesians as well.

In chapter 1, verse 10 (NWT13), we read, "to gather all things together in the Christ, the things in the heavens and the things on the earth." This will happen "at the full limit of the appointed times," that is, future to the time of the writing of Ephesians. What is meant by "the things" in the heavens and "the things" on the earth is not expressed. But the reference cannot be to be inanimate things because the article in neuter plural accusative can also be translated as "that which." So, living humans must be included. As long as Satan's world exists, there will be no unity. So, the final unity must occur in the new heavens and the new earth that God will create. (2 Peter 3:13)

Heaven and earth are also mentioned in Colossians 1:20 (NWT13). The ransom sacrifice of Jesus is discussed, and what will happen is: "through him to reconcile to himself all other things by making peace through the blood he shed on the torture stake, whether the things on the earth or the things in the heavens."

The ransom sacrifice and the blood of Jesus only relates to humans who are sinners and not to the angels in heaven. Thus, "the things on the earth" must refer to those who will inherit the earth, and "the things in the heavens" must refer to those humans who will inherit God's Kingdom in the heavens.

The finite number of those with a heavenly hope

In Revelation 7:9–10, 13–14, a great crowd without number is seen. They are the ones who will be coming out (*erkebomai*, present medium participle, "coming": *ek* "of, out of, from) of the great tribulation. Since the great tribulation occurs on the earth, the great crowd will come out of (survive) the great tribulation and continue to live on the earth.

In contrast to the great crowd, there is a group numbering 144,000. (Rev. 7:1–9) The same group is seen in 14:1 (NWT13), and verse 4 says that the members of this group "were bought **from** among mankind as firstfruits to God and to the Lamb." They are standing on the heavenly Zion (Hebrews 12:22) and are identical with the brothers of Jesus who have the heavenly calling. Mount Zion represented the ruling power.

A finite number of one of the groups that will be saved is also implied in Romans chapter 11. Verse 26 (NWT84) says: “In this manner all Israel¹⁴ will be saved.” We may ask: “In which manner?” The full number (*plērōma*) of the Jews (v. 12) and the full number (*plērōma*) of the people of the nations (v. 25) will be gathered, and in this way “all Israel will be saved.” That there is a fixed number of “Israel” that will be saved, is seen by the words “full number” and by the illustration of the olive tree. There are not an infinite number of tree trunks or one trunk with an infinite height on which both Jews and people of the nations can be grafted into. But there is one tree with a finite number of branches. Before a person can be grafted into the trunk, one branch must be broken off and removed to make room for it.

The passages discussed above clearly portray one group numbering 144,000 with the hope of reigning with Jesus in the heavens, and one group without number having the hope of living on the coming inhabited earth. The only religion with this belief is Jehovah’s Witnesses

THE USE OF THE NAME JEHOVAH

The name “Christian” (*khristianos*) was first used in Antioch, according to Acts 11:26. This name was given because the congregations were followers of Jesus Christ. The focus of the Christian Greek Scriptures is on the person Jesus Christ, and Revelation 19:10 (NWT84) says, “for the bearing witness to Jesus is what inspires prophesying.” This shows that also in the Hebrew Scriptures the focus is on Jesus, although indirectly because those prophecies pointed forward to his arrival as the Messiah and to his future role in the outworking of God’s purposes.

The important role of Jesus was understood by C. T. Russell and the Bible students. But they also understood that Jesus was a servant of his Father, and they used the name of the Father, Jehovah. (Acts 3:13) Because the doctrine of the trinity was rejected by the Bible Students, they had no problems with the use of two names, “Jehovah” for the Father, and “Jesus” for the Son. In *The Watchtower* of August 1892, page 3, there was a question about the name of God, whether it was applied to Jesus. The

14. The name “Israel” is used in two different senses in Romans. This is seen in 2:28, 29. In 9:6–9, “spiritual Israel” is mentioned, and in 11:1–12, “fleshly Israel” is referred to. The reference in 11:26 must be to “spiritual Israel,” and the question is how the whole spiritual Israel will be saved.

answer was: “We confidently assert that the name *Jehovah* is never applied in Scripture to any but the Father.” However, almost all Christian denominations today believe in the trinity doctrine, and therefore most of them do not use the personal name of God. Jehovah’s Witnesses freely use both the name of Jesus and the name of Jehovah, and this stance of the Witnesses is unique compared with other denominations.

The bone of contention is whether the name Jehovah has a rightful place in the Christian Greek Scriptures. The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania published the *New World Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures* in 1950. This translation has the name “Jehovah” 237 places in the text and 72 times in the footnotes. This was strongly criticized by religious leaders and Bible translators, who used the appellation “Lord,” sometimes with capital letters, instead of God’s name.

Their argument was that the name “Jehovah” does not occur in the oldest Greek manuscripts of the Christian Greek Scriptures; therefore, it is wrong to include it in the text of the Christian Greek Scriptures. But there is a problem with this argument, namely, that neither does the word *kyrios* (“lord”) occur in the oldest Greek manuscripts of the Christian Greek Scriptures. In quotations from the Hebrew Scriptures where *yhwh* occurs, the oldest manuscripts of the Christian Greek Scriptures, from the end of the second century CE, have the abbreviation *ks*. We do not have the autographs of the Christian Greek Scriptures, and therefore we do not know their original contents. But it is impossible that the autographs contained abbreviations like *ks*. This means that at some point when the manuscripts of the Christian Greek Scriptures were copied, the original words referring to God were deleted, and the abbreviation *ks* was written instead.

There is one kind of evidence that can illuminate this issue, namely, old fragments of the Greek Septuagint translation (LXX). In all (the few) fragments of this translation from BCE, and the manuscript from 50 CE, God’s name is found, either in old Hebrew or square Aramaic letters or as the Greek letters *iaō*. Interestingly, the oldest LXX manuscripts from the common era, from the end of the 2nd century CE, have the abbreviation *ks*, while the fragment from 50 CE has *yhwh* in old Hebrew letters. Clearly, at some point after 50 CE, and thus, also after the Christian congregation was already established, God’s name in the form of the tetragrammaton (“yhwh”) was deleted from the Greek Septuagint translation (LXX) and

replaced with the abbreviation “*ks*”. Therefore, when God’s name was deleted from the LXX manuscripts and substituted with *ks*, it is logical that at the same time, the name also was removed from the manuscripts of the Christian Greek Scriptures and replaced with *ks* there as well. This suggests that God’s name, *yhw̄h*, occurred in the autographs of the Christian Greek Scriptures.

I have written the book, *The Tetragram—its History, Its Use in the New Testament, and Its Pronunciation* (2018). It includes a detailed study of how the name was used. It presents evidence that the substitute ^u*dōnāi* (“lord”) for *yhw̄h* was not used in BCE, and that the first evidence of this substitute is from around 70 CE. This means that, according to the evidence, the name of God was freely used in the days of Jesus, and the argument that the Greek word *kyrios* (“lord”) was used in the Christian Greek Scriptures because the Jews used the substitute ^u*dōnāi* (“lord”) has no basis. The book also contains a detailed study of the internal evidence of the Christian Greek Scriptures, and this evidence strongly indicates that God’s name was used in these Scriptures.

In the chapter of my book about the pronunciation of the Tetragram, I demonstrate that the pronunciation *Yahweh* is linguistically impossible. I also show that, based on evidence from the Hebrew Bible and Jewish names written in Akkadian cuneiform documents, there is strong evidence in favor of the original pronunciation *Yehowa*.

I have sent three letters to headquarters about God’s name, pointing out in detail several errors in Appendix A4 in NWT13. But evidently, these letters have been ignored.

There is strong evidence in favor of the pronunciation *Yehowa* and that this name occurred in the original manuscripts of the Christian Greek Scriptures.

THE HOLINESS OF LIFE AND BLOOD

One area where the beliefs of Jehovah’s Witnesses are unique compared with all, or most, other Christian denominations, is in their refusal to take blood into their bodies by mouth or by a blood transfusion. I have been a member of the Hospital Liaison Committee in Oslo, Norway, from 1990, when this arrangement started and until 2020. Therefore, I have a detailed

knowledge both of the Biblical background and the practical application of the view of blood in the Bible.

Blood represents life and is holy

The reason for our unique view of blood is the text of the Bible. As a Witness, I always take the text of the Bible in a literal way, unless the context indicates otherwise. And I will not accept any exception to a law of God when the context does not clearly show that such an exception exists. The Bible shows that blood is holy, and that it should not be used for anything except as a sacrifice on the altar. The law of Moses was terminated with its offerings of animals. And the perfect offering of Jesus' flesh and blood, of which the Jewish animal sacrifices were a shadow, has been sacrificed once and for all. (Hebrews 7:27) So, there is no legitimate use of blood anymore.

Before the worldwide flood, humans were not allowed eat animals. This changed after the flood, and Genesis 9:3–6 (NWT84) says:

³ Every moving animal that is alive may serve as food for YOU. As in the case of green vegetation, I do give it all to YOU. ⁴ Only flesh with its soul—its blood—YOU must not eat. ⁵ And, besides that, YOUR blood of YOUR souls, shall I ask back; from the hand of man, from the hand of each one who is his brother, shall I ask back the soul of man. ⁶ Anyone shedding man's blood, by man will his own blood be shed, for in God's image he made man.

From these words, we understand that 1) blood represents life (the soul) of living beings, 2) blood must not be eaten, and 3) blood must not be shed by taking the life of someone. The principal reason for the three points is that blood has a value, which value is asked back if blood is misused. God has created living creatures and it is their blood that represents their lives. With him is the source of life. (Psalm 36:9) Therefore, only he has the right to decide how life and blood can be used.

God's law to Israel contained several commandments regarding blood. Leviticus 17:11, 13 (NWT84) says:

¹¹ For the soul of the flesh is in the blood, and I myself have put it upon the altar for YOU to make atonement for YOUR souls, because it is the blood that makes atonement, by the soul [in it].

¹³ As for any man of the sons of Israel or some alien resident who is residing as an alien in YOUR midst who in hunting catches a wild beast or a fowl that may be eaten, he must in that case pour its blood out and cover it with dust.

The passages show that the only sanctioned use of blood is on the altar as a sacrifice. When an animal is slaughtered, it should be bled. By pouring out the blood on the ground and covering it with dust, the life that the blood represents symbolically goes back to God, who is the source of life. The word “holy” refers to something pure, which is set aside for only one purpose. The passages above show that blood is holy.

The meeting in Jerusalem in 49 CE and its four commandments

The Christian congregation was instituted on the day of Pentecost in the year 33 CE. At that time, the law of Moses, including its commandments regarding blood, was no longer valid. In the year 49, the question arose as to whether people of the nations should be circumcised. This question was discussed at the meeting of the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem. And influenced by holy spirit, the following decision was made, according to Acts 15:28, 29 (NWT84):

²⁸ For the holy spirit and we ourselves have favored adding no further burden to YOU, except these necessary things ²⁹ to keep abstaining from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication.

According to BAGD the Greek middle form of the verb *apekhō* with a genitive object has the meaning “keep away; abstain of.” Because the verb form is present middle infinitive, the NWT84 correctly gives the verb the imperfective rendering, “keep abstaining from.” In table 1.1, we see four examples of *apekhō* in the middle with the following object in the genitive. There can be no doubt that the meaning of all the examples is not to have anything to do with or keep completely away from the actions and states referred to by the objects. The same must be true with the use of the middle form of *apekhō* with genitive objects in Acts 15:29.

*Table 1.1 Examples of the use of *apekhō* (“abstain from”) in NIV*

1 Thessalonians 4:3	It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid (<i>apekhō</i>) sexual immorality.
1 Thessalonians 5:22	Avoid (<i>apekhō</i>) every kind of evil.
1 Timothy 4:3	They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain (<i>apekhō</i>) from certain foods.

1 Peter 2:11

Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain (*apekho*) from sinful desires.

One argument that has been used to justify the continued use of blood is that the commandments were given for a certain time and that they later were canceled. Regarding the command to abstain from “things sacrificed to idols,” mentioned in juxtaposition with the command to abstain “from blood” in Acts 15:29, it has been argued that Paul later waved the command regarding “things sacrificed to idols” and allowed this in his first letter to the Corinthians. Therefore, the prohibition on the use of blood was also later cancelled, so the reasoning goes. The Lutheran view of the use of blood is seen below.

⁶⁵ The apostles commanded Christians **not to eat meat with the blood still in it** (Acts 15:20). Who obeys this command in our day? And yet the people who do not obey it are not sinning. For even the apostles themselves did not wish to burden people’s consciences with such chains. To avoid causing offense, they banned for a time the eating of meat with the blood still in it.

⁶⁶ For this decree must always remind us what the purpose of the gospel is.

⁶⁷ Almost no church laws are kept exactly. Every day many customs go out of use even among those people who are most eager supporters of traditions.

⁶⁸ Nor can consciences be properly cared for unless these customs are changed in the following way: Church laws may be obeyed if this is done without teaching that they are necessary. And consciences should not be harmed, even when traditions change.¹⁵

The words of the Augsburg Confession are a denial of the clear words of the Bible. The decision of the apostles and the elders was placed in the category “Church laws that are not necessary to keep.” No evidence is given for the claim that the laws were given “to avoid offense,” and that they were given “for a time” and then were abolished. But I will consider two arguments that are used.

The first argument is that these laws were only given to Christians of the nations, and they were not binding for Christians of Jewish descent. True, the Christians of the nations were the focus of the discussions. (Acts 15:20) And the reason for this was that Christians in Antioch had raised the question of whether persons of the nations should be circumcised or

15. Confessio Augustana, article 28;
<https://www.stpls.com/uploads/4/4/8/0/44802893/augsburg-confession.pdf>.

not. If the argument is used that the laws only relate to the Christians of the nations, and so we must restrict the application only to the Christians of the nations in Antioch, because the letter was addressed to them (verse 23). However, Acts 16:4 (NWT13) shows that Paul and Timothy visited different Christian congregations, and “they would deliver to them for observance the decrees that had been decided on by the apostles and the elders who were in Jerusalem.” And who were the objects of these deliveries, i.e., who were the recipients? The Greek word *autois* (“them”), masculine plural dative, is used. So, everyone in each congregation was supposed to keep these decrees. And in the congregations were both Christian Jews and Christians of the nations, as 16:3 indicates.

The words of Acts 15:21 (NWT84) are also used by those who oppose the law about blood:

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.

The argument is as follows: So as not to offend or stumble the Jews who knew the law of Moses, it was necessary for the Christians of the nations for some time to keep some of the laws of Moses. And if the Jews should not be offended, the most important law of Moses that would have to be followed, was circumcision. For example, Paul circumcised Timothy, so the Jews should not be offended (16:3). But circumcision was rejected by the apostles and the elders. Likewise, they argue, some of the other commandments of the apostles, such as not eating meat with blood still in it, may have been given as a temporary stop-gap to avoid offending the Jews who still adhered to the law of Moses, and so were not intended to be perpetually binding on Christians.

But are there other reasons why James might have referred to Moses in verse 21? One natural explanation is as follows: The expression “city after city” must refer to all cities with synagogues in Israel and the surrounding countries. In Israel, some peoples of the nations were Jewish proselytes, and they later became Christians. (Acts 2:5–12) In the countries outside Israel, many people of the nations attended the Jewish synagogues, as Acts 17:1–4, 17 show. The point of James may have been that because Moses is regularly read in the synagogues, these four commandments that I suggest are not something completely new. But even people of the nations are already familiar with these commandments because of the regular

reading of the law of Moses in the synagogues that they attend within their respective countries.

Another argument suggesting that the four laws only were valid for a short time, is based on Paul's words about sacrifices to idols in 1 Corinthians chapters 8 and 10: Meat from animals sacrificed to idols could be eaten if no one was offended (10:25), and this shows that the commandment against things sacrificed to idols was no longer valid, is the argument.

The context shows that this argument is invalid. In Corinth, there were temples for idols. Animals were killed, and parts of each animal were offered to the idols, and other parts were eaten by idol worshippers who dined in the idol temples. After the offering and the eating in the idol temple, there was a lot of leftover meat, and this meat was sold the next day at the market. So, the issue was whether Christians could buy the meat of animals that had been sacrificed to idols the day before. This was a decision each Christian had to make, according to Paul. But to dine in the idol temple would not be right, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:18–21. This shows that the commandment against eating meat offered to idols still was in force. Many years after the letters to the Corinthians were written, John wrote, "Guard yourselves from idols." (1 John 5:21, NWT84) So, the commandment from the meeting in Jerusalem in 49 CE was still valid.

We should also keep in mind that one of the four commandments was against *porneia* ("sexual immorality"). This law is mentioned many times in different books in the Christian Greek Scriptures, and many members of the Christian denominations accept that this law still is valid. It would be inconsistent to argue that two of the laws from the meeting in 49 CE are still valid, but the other two were given for a time so the Jews should not be offended. Indeed, the apostles and elders said in their follow up letter recapping that meeting, that all four commandments were equally "necessary" or essential. (Acts 15:28, 29)

Contrary to such an argument, there is one thing that binds all the four laws together. A law is based on one or more principles, which are basic truths. Interestingly, the four laws we are discussing are based on the same principle, namely, the principle of the sanctity of life. Blood represents the life of all creatures, and so blood should not be used for any purpose, except on the altar. To take blood into our body, thus using it, is a violation

of the sanctity of life. Eating the meat of strangled animals is the same as eating blood because the animals are not bled. Humans can, by having sexual relations, convey life to a new generation. God wants those who are newborns to have the best possible environment in which to grow up to become mentally and emotionally sound adults. The best environment is marriage, where man and wife have committed themselves to each other and their offspring. To have sexual relations outside marriage, with the real potential of conveying life to a child in an uncertain environment is a violation of the sanctity of the life of the child. Genesis 9:3, 4 and Leviticus 17:11–14 show that animals can only be killed for food or as a sacrifice to Jehovah God. When an animal is killed to become a sacrifice for an idol, the sanctity of its life is violated. The law against things sacrificed to idols is also based on the principles, “There is only one true God,” and “Only Jehovah God deserves to be worshipped.” And one of the reasons Jehovah deserves to be worshipped is because he created life, and so is its source. (Revelation 4:11) That all of the four laws build on the same essential principle indicates that these are fundamental laws of God and that they are not abolished.

The use of blood for medical purposes

The commandment of abstaining from blood relates to any use of blood, including using it as food. From the middle of the 20th century, blood has also been used for medical purposes. Are such purposes or uses precluded by the decree from the meeting of the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem in 49 CE?

When we consider the reasons behind the laws dealing with blood, the answer must be Yes. Blood represents life, and the source of life is God. (Psalm 36:10) Therefore, he has the sole right to decide how life, represented by blood, should be used. As we have seen, if a person killed a human being and shed his blood, he himself was considered guilty and therefore would be punished by having his own blood shed. If an animal was killed for food, its blood should be poured out and covered with dust. This indicates that blood should not be used for anything; the only legal use was on the altar as a sacrifice. This occurred when the law of Moses was validated, and these sacrifices pointed forward to the perfect sacrifice of the flesh and blood of Jesus. Because blood is holy and there is no legal use of blood, even modern medical use is a violation of God’s law, just as much as taking in blood through the mouth as food or drink is.

Moreover, as Bible-believing Christians, we take the words of the Bible in an absolute sense if the context does not show that there is an exception. The words of the law are “abstain from blood,” and no exception is listed. Therefore, we will abstain from blood in any form.

The meaning of the Hebrew word dam and the Greek word haima

If the servants of God shall be able to obey the laws of God, these laws must be expressed in a clear language so they can be clearly identified. Let us take a closer look at the four laws that we are discussing. NWT13 says:

To keep abstaining from things sacrificed to idols (*eidōlothytos*), from blood (*haima*), from what is strangled (*pniktos*), and from sexual immorality (*porneia*).

The Greek word *eidōlothytos* has two elements, *eidōlon* (“idol”) and *thysia* (“sacrifice”) “offerings to an idol” Louw and Nida define *eidōlothytos* as “meat offered to an idol.” The authors also correctly say that, “there is no specific element meaning ‘meat,’ so the definition is too narrow. While most sacrifices offered to idols were meat, different other items could also be offered. Therefore, the definition of *eidōlothytos* is “anything that is sacrificed to an idol.” This is a clear and explicit definition.

The word *porneia* is defined by Louw and Nida as “to engage in sexual immorality of any kind, often with the implication of prostitution.” This definition fits the Classical Greek world but not the Christian Greek Scriptures. In these Scriptures *porneia* only has the meaning “sexual intercourse” between a married person and one to whom he or she is not married, between unmarried persons, and between homosexuals. The basis for this prohibition was not to produce children outside marriage, and this can only be done by sexual intercourse. Homosexuals cannot produce children but they mimic the action that can produce children.

Then we come to the words *haima*, and all lexicons show that the reference of *haima* is the red fluid that is in the veins of humans and animals. Related words are *haimatekekhytia* “the shedding of blood” and *haimorroēō* (“to bleed”). The word *pniktos* refers to creatures that have been strangled. In such creatures the blood has not been drained, and therefore, eating meat of strangled creatures is the same as eating blood.

The definition of *haima* is simple because it exclusively refers to the red fluid in the veins of humans and animals.

Abstaining from haima in connection with medical treatment

There is one issue in connection with *haima* and modern medical science that must be addressed. Methods have been developed to fractionate blood, and such fractions are often used in the treatment of sick persons. Is receiving such fractions a violation of the law to abstain from blood? Based on the words of the Scriptures, the answer to this question is clearly No. Does this include any fraction of the blood, such as erythrocytes, thrombocytes, and leucocytes? From the point of view of the law of God in Acts 15:29 the answer is Yes. What is forbidden is what is called “full blood,” i.e., the red fluid in the veins of humans and animals.

In order to understand what the issue is all about, I will quote two passages discussing the eating of an animal that is found dead: Leviticus 17:15 (above) and Deuteronomy 14:21(below):

¹⁵ If anyone, whether a native or a foreigner, eats an animal found dead or one torn by a wild animal, he must then wash his garments and bathe in water and be unclean until the evening; then he will be clean.

²¹ “You must not eat any animal that was found dead. You may give it to the foreign resident who is inside your cities, and he may eat it, or it may be sold to a foreigner. For you are a holy people to Jehovah your God.

An animal found dead or one torn by a wild animal was not drained for blood, and therefore it was a violation of God’s law to eat such an animal. A person who ate blood was guilty to die. But because the passage says that a person who ate meat from an animal that was found dead, he could take step to become clean, he ate the meat without knowing that in was unbled (See *The Watchtower* of April 15, 1983, page 30) The principle in this passage can be applied to the situation when a Christian accepts a blood fraction that he believes is not a violation of the holiness of blood.

The passage from Deuteronomy shows that there is nothing wrong with the liquid of blood, and it does not contaminate a person who eats blood. Therefore, a Jew could sell the meat of an animal that was found dead to a person who did not worship God. ***But the issue is obedience to the law of God about the holiness of life*** for those who were servants of God.

The book, *How to Remain in God’s Love* (2018), page 92, says:

Jehovah's Witnesses understand that "abstaining from . . . blood" involves more than not eating or drinking it. It means not accepting blood transfusions, not donating blood, and not storing our own blood for transfusion. It also means not accepting transfusions of any of the four main parts of blood—red cells, white cells, platelets, and plasma.

The words, "Jehovah's Witnesses understand" mean that the members of the Governing Body of Jehovah's Witnesses have decided that each Witness must abstain from all the things that are mentioned in the quotation. When a person becomes one of Jehovah's Witnesses, he is taught "the understanding" of the Witnesses regarding blood. And if he does not abstain from each thing, he or she can be disfellowshipped.

During my 25 years as a member of the Hospital Liaison Committee I found it logical that because red blood cells, platelets, white blood cells, and blood plasma were the principal parts of blood, these parts were included in the law against taking blood into the body. But whether fractions like albumin, immunoglobulins, and Factor VIII were included in the term *blood* (*haima*) and therefore had to be avoided was something each Witness had to decide. But my conclusion today is different — and for very good reasons.

In 1974, the Governing Body made the decision that oral and anal copulation by a married couple was the same as *porneia* and these actions could lead both to the dissolving the marriage and to disfellowshipping. This decision was retracted in *The Watchtower* of February 15, 1978, page 31, and the reason was "***in view of the absence of clear Scriptural instruction.***"

This is a principle that should be applied in connection with any Christian doctrine. And if we apply it in connection with the prohibition against *haima* ("blood"), the conclusion is that the only meaning of blood in the Christian Greek Scriptures is the red fluid in the veins of humans and animals. Because there is ***no Scriptural instruction*** showing that red blood cells, platelets, white blood cells, and blood plasma is included in the concept "blood," these are not included in the prohibition against blood. When the members of the Governing Body include these factors, this is a human commandment without basis in the Bible.

The consequences of refusing blood and blood fractions

What about *life* itself, since life like blood is holy? If a doctor says that I need blood to survive, will not upholding life be more important than keeping a law of God about blood? Matthew 16:24–26 (NWT84) says:

²⁴ “If anyone wants to come after me, let him disown himself and pick up his torture stake and continually follow me. ²⁵ For whoever wants to save his soul will lose it; but whoever loses his soul for my sake will find it. ²⁶ For what benefit will it be to a man if he gains the whole world but forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”

These words show that to follow the laws of God is more important than to preserve the soul (the life). I will illustrate the issue in the following way: In the days of the Roman Emperor Nero, the Christians were persecuted. Consider a family of husband, wife, and a child, who were arrested, and who were taken to the amphitheater. In the middle, there was an altar with a burning fire, and beside the fire was a receptacle with incense. The father got an ultimatum: either he should pour some incense on the fire, thus making an offering to the genius of the Emperor or he and his family would be killed. Because the Christians would not break the law of God, even if the action required was just a token act that could save their lives, the Christians would not do it. Therefore, we have the word “martyr.” The same is true with God’s law concerning blood. Christians will not break this law, even if they can save their life by breaking it.

A Witnesses who refuses blood puts the law of God above his own life. But only rarely will that result in his death. In Norway, sick persons with the most complicated cases are sent to the big hospitals in Oslo. And the Hospital Liaison Committee, where I have been a member, has assisted hundreds of sick Witnesses in the Oslo area and the districts around Oslo. One time every month, the HLC has a meeting, where we discuss the cases where we have assisted, and at this meeting, we also discuss how we best can assist those who will ask for our help.

During the 29 years when I have been a member of the HLC, I am aware of only two persons who died after an operation, but who probably could have survived if they had received blood in some form. The medical literature shows that in contrast with these two, several persons in Norway have died *because of* complications caused by blood transfusions, and there are hundreds of others whose lives have been shortened because of immunological reactions caused by blood transfusions. Jehovah’s

Witnesses believe that the laws of God are good, and they may help persons to avoid problems and to lead a good life. In rare cases, Witnesses have been tortured into giving up their faith, and in other cases, they have died because they would not violate God's laws. The Witnesses want to live, and they take reasonable measures to continue to live. But if there is a situation where they must die to keep God's laws, they know that in the future, they will have a resurrection from the dead.

The fact that a Witness who refuses blood almost never dies shows that even the human commandments made by the members of the Governing Body regarding the four principal blood components, that were in force during the time period I mention above, did not have fatal consequences for the Witnesses. But what really has been the consequence of these human commandments?

There has been one positive consequence. Several medical studies in recent years have concluded that transfusing blood components from one person to another may negatively influence the health of the one who gets the blood components. Particularly his or her immune system may be negatively influenced, and therefore, his or her life span may be shortened. The faithfulness of a Witness toward the human commandments regarding the four blood components has to some degree prevented him or her from the possible detrimental effects of receiving foreign blood components.

But the mentioned human commandments also have had negative effects. It is my experience that most doctors in Norway respect the decision not to accept a blood transfusion. However, this decision may be important in connection with a big operation. The members of the Governing Body have, without any basis in the Bible, forbidden Witnesses to store their own blood before a big operation. I know that the consequences of this may be that some of the sick tissue that should have been removed is not removed.

For example, a Witness has a big cancer tumor with several outgrowths. The surgeon removes the tumor. But because the Witness has refused to store his own blood before the operation and refuses the four mentioned blood components, the surgeon will not dare to remove all the outgrowths of the tumor because this could, without recourse to blood, lead to the death of the patient. If the surgeon could use erythrocytes or thrombocytes, it would not be a need for whole blood, and the surgeon

would be able to remove all the cancer outgrowths. This means that following the demand of the members of the Governing Body to refuse both the storage of one's own blood and the use of the four blood components, could reduce the life-span of the Witness. I have personally been informed by several doctors about this situation.

When I now go against the decision of the members of the Governing Body and accept both the storing of my own blood and the four primary blood components, can I then be certain that I am following the will of Jehovah? Absolutely! We must abstain from blood, not because we are contaminated by eating or having blood infused. But the issue is obedience toward God, as in the illustration above about the offering to the genius of the Emperor. It is absolutely clear that *haima* only refers to the red fluid in the veins of humans and animals. So, if I accept one of the four components of blood, there is no **Scriptural instruction** showing that I am violating the law of God.

I would like to illustrate this situation with the words of Paul in Romans 14:5, 6; 22, 23:

⁵One man judges one day as above another; another judges one day the same as all others; let each one be fully convinced in his own mind. ⁶The one who observes the day observes it to Jehovah. Also, the one who eats, eats to Jehovah, for he gives thanks to God; and the one who does not eat does not eat to Jehovah, and yet gives thanks to God.

²²The faith that you have, keep it to yourself before God. Happy is the man who does not judge himself by what he approves. ²³But if he has doubts, he is already condemned if he eats, because he does not eat based on faith. Indeed, everything that is not based on faith is sin.

Paul discusses that someone judges a day above another and others view all days as similar. He also discusses the situation when someone does not eat a certain kind of food while others eat this food. Each one must be fully convinced in his own mind, and this is an important point. The Governing Body cannot prove that any of the four principal components **are blood** in the sense of the word *haima*. Therefore, I am fully convinced that a Witness can accept each of these four components. It is not even a matter of conscience, an issue that each one must carefully consider.

My standpoint is based on my faith in the Holy Scriptures as the only basis for Christian living. I accept that elders in each congregation must make decisions that I and others must follow. And I accept that elders are

leading the worldwide organization of Jehovah's Witnesses, and that we must follow their decisions. But I do not accept that the Governing Body makes decisions on my part that relates to my Christian living and Christian faith, or that they demand that their consciences can overturn my conscience. The Holy Bible is my only authority! ¹⁶ *The Watchtower* of October 1, 1972, page 589, correctly says: **“Where God’s Word does not itself ‘draw the line,’ no human has the right to add to that Word by doing so.”** The members of the Governing Body have wrongly “drawn the line” regarding blood components that Christians cannot accept. And I cannot accept that.

The conclusion of the discussion above is that there are no issues of conscience in connection with different blood fragments. Red blood cells, platelets, white blood cells, blood plasma, albumin, immunoglobulins, and Factor VIII are not blood (*haima*), and there is no religious reason why Christians should not accept any of these fractions in a situation of illness. However, because each of these fractions can transfer disease from the donor or negatively influence the immune system of the one who gets the fraction, there is a medical issue that each one should consider.

Only the red fluid in the veins of humans and animals is blood (*haima*). Taking this red fluid into the body is a violation of God’s law. Red blood cells, platelets, white blood cells, blood plasma, albumin, immunoglobulins, and Factor VIII are not blood (*haima*). Taking one of these components into the body is not a violation of God’s law.

To the best of my knowledge, Jehovah’s Witnesses is the only group that both abstain from blood in connection with food and in connection with medical treatment. This shows that the Witnesses are the only ones that follow what the Scriptures say about blood. But it is also a fact that the members of the Governing Body have made several human commandments in connection with the use of blood — commandments that have no basis in the text of the Bible and therefore are against the Bible.

16. A detailed discussion of the holiness of blood is found in the article, “The Governing Body in 1972: “Where God’s Word does not itself ‘draw the line,’ no human has the right to add to that Word by doing so.”

THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Kingdom of God with Jesus Christ as king is the Biblical doctrine that, more than any other, makes JW different from other Christian denominations. If I did not believe that Jesus *is* king, in the literal and full sense of the word, my life would have been entirely different from what it is.

The Kingdom's influence on the lives of its subjects

Because I believe that Jesus Christ at present is acting as king, I take the standpoint that I am an ambassador for the Kingdom. (2 Corinthians 5:20) Because of this position, I preach the good news of the Kingdom, asking people to become reconciled to God. I behave as an ambassador, and I will not be a part of the military establishment in the country where I live, nor will I vote for a political party. But I will try hard to keep the laws of the state, be a good neighbor, and contribute to a pleasant environment.

Believing that Jesus *is* king has a strong influence on the lives of Christians. Because of this, they refuse military service, they do not vote, and they are no part of the world.

I do not share the goals of most people around me. However, I like to have good friends to spend time with; I like good food and drink, and I like to experience new things when I have a vacation. But at the same time, I cherish values that most other persons around me do not cultivate. And my beliefs are very different from other people's beliefs. To put the situation in the right perspective, I quote some words from the book of Daniel. In chapter 2, he describes the large image of a person consisting of different metals. These metals represent world powers that would come and go, one after the other. The last world power is symbolized by the feet consisting of iron and clay. A big stone hit the image on the feet, and the whole image was crushed. In chapter 2, verse 44, Daniel explains the meaning of the stone that crushed the image. I quote from NWT84.

And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be brought to ruin. And the kingdom itself will not be passed on to any other people. It will crush and put to an end all these kingdoms, and it itself will stand to times indefinite.

Daniel's words show that God's Kingdom will crush "all these kingdoms," and so that must include Norway, the USA, Russia, Israel, and all other countries. Then God's Kingdom will rule over the whole earth and make peace. Most persons who say they are Christians will not accept the idea that all the present nations will be removed by God's Kingdom. But if we believe that the Bible is the word of God, we cannot escape this conclusion.

I do not know precisely when God's Kingdom will crush the nations of this world, although there is strong evidence that this will happen in the not too distant future. But because I believe in the whole Bible, including these words, I chose to promote the interests of God's Kingdom instead of working to get a high position in this world or become materially wealthy.¹⁷

The chronology of the Kingdom of God

The basic message of Jesus when he was on earth was about the Kingdom of heaven. Often, he said: "The Kingdom of heaven is near." (Matthew 4:17) The meaning of this was that Jesus, the king of the Kingdom, was among them. Luke 17:21 (NAB) says: "The kingdom of God is among you." But when Jesus returned to heaven, the Kingdom was no longer among them.

The apostles waited for the establishment of the Kingdom of heaven. On one occasion, when they were near Jerusalem, "they thought that the kingdom of God would appear there immediately." (Luke 19:11, NAB) In connection with that, Jesus spoke an illustration, which began with the following words (verse 12): "A nobleman went off to a distant country to obtain kingship for himself and then to return." This indicates that Jesus would go back to heaven, and when he returned, the Kingdom of God would be established.

17. The standpoint of Jehovah's Witnesses since World War II has been that because the Witnesses are ambassadors for God's Kingdom, no nation has the right to put Witnesses under compulsory service. Because of this, the Witnesses have refused both military service and civil service as an alternative to military service. In 1996, the Governing Body compromised the status as ambassadors by accepting that Witnesses could accept alternative service instead of military service if their conscience allowed them to do that. No biblical reason for this was given. This is discussed in the article, "We cannot trust the views and decisions of the Governing Body" in the category "The Governing Body" in www.mybelovedreligion.no.

The prophecy from the Old Testament that is quoted most times in the Christian Greek Scriptures is Psalm 110:1, 2 (NWT13). These verses throw some light on the issue we are discussing:

¹ Jehovah declared to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand Until I place your enemies as a stool for your feet.” ² Jehovah will extend the scepter of your power out of Zion, saying: “Go subduing in the midst of your enemies.”

The prophecy itself shows that at one point in time, the mentioned “Lord” will rule in the midst of his enemies, and they will become a stool for his feet. Peter shows in Acts 2:34–36 that the mentioned “Lord,” who will rule, is Jesus Christ. When would his rule “in the midst of” or among his enemies begin? The epistle to the Hebrews was written many years after Jesus returned to heaven, and in 10:12, 13 (NIV) we read:

¹² But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. ¹³ Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool.

The quoted words show that Jesus did not rule in the Kingdom of God, in the middle of his enemies, when he was on the earth. And several decades after that time, when Hebrews was written, he was still waiting for the beginning of his rule.

The book of Revelation was written at the end of the 1st century CE, and the first verse says that the book was written, “to show his slaves the things that must shortly take place.”¹⁸ The setting of Revelation is a time period before Jesus comes as the judge. (2 Thessalonians 1:7–10) The judgment of God’s enemies is described in Revelation chapters 17–20. Before this final judgment, a great number of things will happen. Two passages from Revelation help us to know something about when God’s Kingdom would be established relative to the final judgment:

Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and voices could be heard shouting in heaven, calling, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever.”... “We give thanks to you, Almighty Lord God, He who is, He who was, for assuming your great power and beginning your reign.” (11:15, 17, NJB)

18. The word “shortly” (*takhus*) has the references “speedily; quickly; without delay; soon; shortly; before long.” It can refer to the short interval between two actions, or to actions that unfold quickly. In a prophetic context, the concept “shortly” can be much longer than we expect. (1 Peter 3:8)

⁹ The great dragon, the primeval serpent, known as the devil or Satan, who had led all the world astray, was hurled down to the earth and his angels were hurled down with him. ¹⁰ Then I heard a voice shout from heaven, ‘Salvation and power and empire for ever have been won by our God, and all authority for his Christ, now that the accuser, who accused our brothers day and night before our God, has been brought down. . . . ¹² So let the heavens rejoice and all who live there; but for you, earth and sea, disaster is coming—because the devil has gone down to you in a rage, knowing that he has little time left.’ (12:9, 10, 12, NJB)

The words of 11:15 show that the Kingdom belongs to God, and Jesus Christ is the king in God’s Kingdom. The basic meaning of the word translated by “assuming” in 11:17 is “taking.” God is thanked because he has taken his great power and has begun to reign. Because Revelation deals with the last things before Jesus comes as the judge, he must begin to reign at this time when his enemies have become his footstool.

The words of 12:9 show that the Devil and his angels were thrown out of heaven. From this time, the power and the Kingdom belong to God, and the authority belongs to Christ. The chronology of this event is shown in 12:12: God’s Kingdom is established “a short period of time”¹⁹ before the Devil is bound and thrown into the abyss. (Revelation 20:1–3) How long this “short period of time” is, we do not know. But the important point is that there is “a short period of time” *after* God’s Kingdom is established and *before* Jesus comes as the judge to remove all God’s enemies.

The Kingdom of God is established “a short period of time” before the final judgment.

This time setting corresponds closely with the great prophecy of Jesus in Matthew chapters 24 and 25, Mark chapter 13, and Luke chapter 21. In Matthew 24:30 to 25:19, the coming (*erkbomai*) of Jesus as the judge to remove God’s enemies is mentioned seven times.²⁰ But before this coming, several things would happen.

19. The word translated as “time” is *kairos*, which refers to “an appointed time, a specific time.” Therefore, the rendering “a short period of time” of NWT13 is excellent.

20. The eighth time *erkbomai* is mentioned is in Matthew 25:31. I show in the article, “‘For many are called, but few are chosen’ — what the members of the

According to Matthew 24:3, the disciples asked about the sign of the presence (*parousia*) of Jesus. The word *parousia* is in many Bible translations rendered as “coming.” But this is misleading. Some lexicons give the meaning “coming” in addition to “presence.” I have checked all the references to the Greek literature in ten lexicons where *parousia* also is supposed to mean “coming,” but none of the references clearly show this *instantaneous* meaning. In Philippians 2:12, *parousia* (“presence”) is contrasted with *apousia* (“absence”). And all the occurrences of *parousia* in the Christian Greek Scriptures very well fit the rendering “presence.” In Matthew 24:3 *synteleias tou aiōnos* (“the conclusion of the system of things”) is parallel to *parousia* (“presence”). In the parable of Jesus in Matthew 13:24–30, 36–43 *synteleia aiōnos* (“a conclusion of a system of things”) is said to be the harvest (*therismos*) where many things will happen (verse 39). The fact that “harvest” parallels *aiōn(os)* (“a system of things”) and *aiōn(ou)* parallels *parousia* (“presence”), indicates that *parousia* is not an instantaneous “coming,” but represents a period of time when Jesus is present. That the term *parousia* is a period of time is also confirmed by Matthew 24:37–39. In these verses, the *parousia* is said to be similar to the **days** of Noah, that is, to a period of time. At the end of the *parousia* of Jesus, he will *be coming* as the judge and destroy all the enemies of God. Thus, the presence of Jesus is the same as “the short period of time” mentioned in Revelation 12:12.

The sign of the presence of Jesus consists of several events, the first one being “wars and reports of wars” because “nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom.” That many nations and kingdoms would take part in a war, fits World War I, which started in 1914. This is also the case with the red horse in Revelation 6:4 that would “take the peace away from the earth.” The other parts of the sign have also been seen since 1914, including the unprecedented worldwide preaching of JW. (Matthew 24:14)

Jesus showed that at the time of his *parousia*, the fulfillment of the “sign” would be understood by his followers. He said: “So with you when you see all these things: know that he is near, right at the gates.” (Matthew

Governing Body do not understand” in the category, “The Governing Body” that this refers to the coming of Jesus as king on the year 1914 and not to his coming as judge in the great tribulation.

24:33, NJB) Actually, what does the word “near” signify? The explanation comes in verses 34 and 36 (NJB):

In truth I tell you, before this generation has passed away, all these things will have taken place. . . But as for that day and hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, no one but the Father alone.”

These words of Jesus show that in the “time of the conclusion” particular events constituting a sign would happen. When these events were seen, his followers would know that the end would come in *the generation* of those who saw the sign. But the day and hour for the final judgment, no human being would know.

Because of all the points and passages discussed above, I believe that Jesus has been reigning as king in the Kingdom of God since 1914 CE. And that is the reason why I behave as an ambassador for the king and his Kingdom.

THE PROPHECIES OF THE BIBLE AND JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES

I will start this section by repeating that the Bible has two kinds of material: 1) the material where everything there is to know about an issue is spread across the books of the Bible, and so we have to make a synthesis of this material, and 2) the kind of material where only half is found in the Bible, and we must find the other half ourselves — its intended application or fulfillment in the real world. The first mentioned material relates to the fundamental doctrines of the Bible, and in the last section, I discussed several doctrines that are taught by JW and by no one else. The second kind of material relates to the prophecies of the Bible, and I will discuss this material in this section.

THE APPOINTED TIMES OF THE NATIONS

In the last section, I quoted the words of Jesus, indicating that his followers should and would understand his great prophecy. (Matthew 24:33–36; Mark 13:29–32; Luke 21:7-38) In this section, I will discuss one part of this prophecy, namely the expression “the appointed times of the nations” in Luke 21:24

NWT13 says: “And Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations until the appointed times of the nations are fulfilled.” Because Jesus said that

his followers would understand his great prophecy, this verse must also be understood. There are no clues in the context that can help us understand the words. Therefore, there must be threads somewhere in the Bible that can help us understand this prophecy. So, what are *the appointed times of the nations* (*kairoi ethnōn*)?

Let us first do some reasoning. In Matthew 24:15, Jesus urged the readers to use discernment in connection with “the disgusting thing that causes desolation.” Jesus may, or may not have made some comments regarding the identity of this disgusting thing (Matthew 24:15, 16; Luke 21:20, 21), but Jesus exhorted his followers to use discernment. To do that, disciples who did not hear the Hebrew words of Jesus at the time he uttered them, had to rely on the later recorded Greek translation of his words, *bdelugma tēs erēmōseōs*, while those who heard Jesus’ words could look for the Hebrew words he used. How could they come to an understanding of these words? By looking up similar words in the LXX, or, if Hebrew was their mother tongue, they could look for Hebrew words with similar meaning. In both cases, only three passages containing a reference to ‘disgusting thing(s)’ can be identified, namely, Daniel 9:27; 11:31; and 12:11. By reading these passages in context, an identification of the abomination could be possible.

This is an important principle: When prophetic words are used in the Christian Greek Scriptures, we have to look to the Hebrew Scriptures to see whether the prophetic words are taken from one of the Hebrew books. This is particularly important when there are few clues in the Christian Greek Scriptures as to the meaning of particular prophetic words. In his great prophecy, Jesus referred several times to the book of Daniel. In Matthew 24:21, he referred to the great tribulation, which is mentioned in Daniel 12:1. In Matthew 24:30 and 25:31, he refers to the Son of man, who is mentioned in Daniel 7:13. Moreover, the Kingdom of God is the principal theme of Daniel, as it is also in the great prophecy of Jesus. (Matthew 24:14; 25:31) And there are some words in the Greek text of Matthew 24 whose equivalents are found in the Hebrew text of Daniel, such as *synteleia* (“conclusion”; Hebrew, *qēsΩ*), which is used 23 times in Daniel and one time in Matthew 24:3. There can be no doubt that Jesus had Daniel in mind when he uttered his great prophecy.

Jesus referred to the book of Daniel several times in his great prophecy. Daniel can also help us understand the reference of “the appointed times of the nations.”

The linguistic parallels between Luke 21:24 and Daniel chapter 4

The words of Jesus in Luke 21:24, *kairoi ethnōn*, have no other clues in Luke except that the subject is “Jerusalem.” Therefore, if these words are to have any meaning for us, we have to look for clues in the Hebrew Scriptures. The first question to ask must be in which language the words were uttered. Jesus either used Hebrew or Aramaic, and the evidence suggests that the language Jesus used when he spoke with his disciples was Hebrew. However, we see from the evangelists that Jesus could use Aramaic words as well. If Jesus spoke in Hebrew, he most likely used the plural form of *mō‘ēd* where Luke has *kairoi*. Both the word *mō‘ēd* and the word *kairos* refer to a specific time, an appointed time. If we look at the passages where this word is used in the Hebrew Scriptures, we find that only in one place is this Hebrew word stipulated by numbers, indicating specific times, and that is Daniel 12:7: “one appointed time, appointed times and a half.” Both the Greek LXX and Theodotion use *kairos* in this passage.

In the Aramaic text of Daniel 7:25, we find the same numbers mentioned, and the Aramaic word used is *‘iddān*, which indicates that *‘iddān* in Aramaic and *mō‘ēd* in Hebrew both refer to an appointed time. Interestingly, both the LXX and Theodotion use *kairos* both in Daniel 7:25 and 12:7. The Aramaic word *‘iddān* is also stipulated by numbers in Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32. Thus, we see that there are only three chapters in the Hebrew Scriptures where the Hebrew or Aramaic word for “appointed time” is stipulated or qualified by a particular number.

If Jesus spoke Aramaic, he would have used *‘iddān* in Luke 21:24, but because people in his day understood both Hebrew and Aramaic, regardless of which language Jesus used, the three mentioned chapters in Daniel would be the only ones that could be antecedents of *kairoi ethnōn* alluded to in Luke 21:24. While the Hebrew *mō‘ēd* of Daniel 12:7 and the Aramaic *‘iddān* of 7:25 are translated by *kairos* in the LXX and in Theodotion, the four examples of *‘iddān* in Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32 are translated by the plural form of *etos* (“year”) in the LXX and by *kairos* in

Theodotion. The rendering *etos* in the LXX is an interpretative translation, which deviates from the usual rendering of *kairos* for *'iddān*. Moreover, the Greek translation of Theodotion, which is much closer to the Hebrew and Aramaic texts of Daniel than the LXX, and which is the one that is quoted by the writers in the Christian Greek Scriptures, has *kairos* also in Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32.

Thus, one or more of the three mentioned passages must have been what Jesus had in mind in Luke 21:24. But which one? As the literature of JW has shown, there are strong arguments in favor of applying Dan 7:25 and 12:7 to “the time of the conclusion (end)” after 1914, so the only possible reference that may have been in the mind of Jesus is Daniel chapter 4. Both if Jesus used the Hebrew word *mō'ēd* and the Aramaic word *'iddān*, the natural Greek equivalent for a writer of the Christian Greek Scriptures to choose would be *kairos*. This indicates that there is a definite **linguistic** link between Luke 21:24 and Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32.

There is a linguistic parallel between “the appointed times” in Luke 21:24 and the seven times in Daniel chapter 4.

In Luke 21:24, the city of Jerusalem is connected with the appointed times of the nations. Jerusalem would be trampled on by the nations during the appointed times of the nations. But what is the reference to “Jerusalem”?

The use of city names

In the Bible, a city can have at least three references: 1) the inhabitants of the city, 2) the material part of the city (houses, walls, and brickwork), and 3) what the city represents or stands for. The city as a geographical place is referred to in Matthew 2:1, and the inhabitants are referred to when “Capernaum” is used in Matthew 11:23. The most important use in our context is 3), so let us look at some examples. Second Kings 23:19 speaks of “the towns of Samaria,” and “Samaria,” which itself was a town, and which evidently represents the whole Northern Kingdom; the same is true in Ezekiel 16:46.

On this basis, when we find the word “Jerusalem” in Luke 21:24, we cannot at the outset know what it refers to. When we look at the use of cities in prophetic contexts in the Hebrew Scriptures, what the prophets evidently had in mind, in most cases, is what the city represented. This

would suggest that “Jerusalem” in Jesus’ prophesy at Luke 21:24 refers neither to the people of Jerusalem nor to the city as a geographical place, but rather to Jerusalem in its representative sense.

Against this, it can be argued that the literal destruction of the city Jerusalem was in the mind of Jesus, as shown in Luke 21:20, and in this verse, “Jerusalem” must refer to the city and its inhabitants. So, if “Jerusalem” in v. 24 does not refer to the literal city of Jerusalem, then the single word “Jerusalem” must be used in two different senses in the near context of verses 20 and 24. But is this natural?

Taking Biblical patterns into account, there is nothing strange or uncommon in such use. In Matthew 2:1, “Jerusalem” refers to the city as a geographical area, but in verse 3, “Jerusalem” refers to the inhabitants of the city. In Matthew 11:23, 24, Jesus first uses “Sodom” to refer to the city, but the words “the land of Sodom” refer to the inhabitants. It is even possible to use a single definite substantive in two different senses within the context of the same thought or sentence. In John 2:19 (NWT13), Jesus says: “Tear down this temple, and in three days I will raise it up’.” Grammatically the pronoun “it” must refer to “this temple” (the literal temple), but in verse 20, it is stated that he referred to “the temple of his body.” This means that “the temple” that should be broken down was the literal temple in Jerusalem, but the temple that should be raised up was a spiritual one. The references of words can also change in prophecies.

Different uses of “Jerusalem” and “Israel”

If Jesus in Luke 21:24 had the literal city Jerusalem in mind, this would require that the Jews continued to be God’s chosen people, or at least that they would become his chosen people again at the end of the appointed times of the nations. However, this is contradicted by the Scriptures. Exodus 19:5, 6 shows that the Jews would not always be the people of God, but only if they fulfilled the condition of obeying Jehovah’s laws. The people did not do that, and at a certain point in time, they received their last chance to repent during a period of seventy weeks. (Daniel 9:24–27) When they did not repent, they were rejected. On this basis, it would be strange if Jesus uttered a prophecy alluding to a restoration of the literal city of Jerusalem at the end of those “appointed times of the nations”.

In the Christian Greek Scriptures, it is shown that “Israel” can be applied to two different groups. In Galatians 6:16, Paul speaks about “the

Israel of God,” which implies there is another Israel that does not belong to God. The same is implied by the words “Israel in a fleshly way” in 1 Corinthians 10:18, and it is explicitly stated in Romans 9:6–8. It is interesting to see how this difference between the two Israels or Jerusalems is expressed in the prophecies. For example, in Isaiah chapter 60 there is a prophecy regarding Zion or Jerusalem (v. 14). The words of this prophecy are not applied to fleshly Jews or to the literal Jerusalem, but rather to the “New Jerusalem,” as the following parallels show:

Table 1.2 Different uses of “Jerusalem”

Isaiah 60:1–2, 19	Revelation 21:23
Isaiah 60:3	Revelation 21:24
Isaiah 60:11, 20	Revelation 21:25
Isaiah 60:5	Revelation 21:26

Jeremiah 31:31 has a prophecy about a new covenant “with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” These words are quoted in Hebrews 8:7–13, and it is implied that the law covenant would be abolished. Then the words of Jeremiah are quoted in Hebrews 9:14, 15, and it is shown that “Israel” and “Judah” in the prophecy do not refer to the literal “Israel” and “Judah,” but to “the ones (anointed Christians) who have been called.” Based on the passages above, we must conclude that it is extremely unlikely that the prophetic use of “Jerusalem” in Luke 21:24 refers to the literal city Jerusalem or its inhabitants.

The reference to “Jerusalem” in Luke 21:24

When we reject a literal interpretation of “Jerusalem” in Luke 21:24, we need to find a definition of its prophetic use. Jehovah gave a promise to David about an everlasting kingdom (1 Chronicles 17:11–15), and this kingdom was connected with Jerusalem. (1 Chronicles 29:23; Isaiah 24:23; Jeremiah 3:17) Jerusalem is called “the town of the grand King” (Psalm 48:1, 2), and Jesus applies these words to Jerusalem in his day, even though there was no human king in the city. (Matthew 5:35)

Hebrews 11:10 refers to “a city,” which Abraham waited for, and in 12:22, this city is called “heavenly Jerusalem.” In Hebrews 12:28, we learn that this city represents “a kingdom that cannot be shaken,” and this

kingdom must be God's Kingdom. The difference between the literal Jerusalem and "the one to come" is also mentioned in 13:14. On the basis of all these passages, I conclude that the name "Jerusalem" stands for the Kingdom of God.

The trampling of "Jerusalem"

The word "until" in Luke 21:24 indicates that the trampling of "Jerusalem" (the Kingdom of God) would end at a certain point of time, when "the appointed times of the nations" ended. Thus, a restoration is implied in the words of Luke 21:24, and this restoration is prophetically mentioned in many places in the Bible, including in Acts 3:21. Taking this restoration as a point of departure helps us to see that "Jerusalem" stands for the Kingdom of God and also helps us to understand how this Kingdom was trampled upon during the appointed times of the nations.

A restoration is mentioned in Acts 15:15, 16, namely, "to rebuild the booth of "David". (Amos 9:11, 12)²¹ What is this "booth of David"? *The Watchtower* of 1949, page 281, answers that it is "the royal house of David made up of the heirs to the kingdom covenant," and this is a good explanation. The first members of this royal house were connected with the Christian congregation from the day of Pentecost in 33 CE.

The prophecy about the booth of David and its restoration parallels Luke 21:24 because David's booth represents the Kingdom of God or Jehovah's throne on the earth, and this dynasty of kings is connected with Jerusalem. (1 Chronicles 29:23) Thus, the restoration of "Jerusalem" after "the appointed times of the nations" have ended is another way of speaking about the rebuilding of "the booth of David". This "booth" did not fall in 70 CE when Jerusalem was destroyed (its destruction being implied in Luke 21:20–23), but it fell when the last king of David's dynasty, Zedekiah, lost his kingdom in 607 BCE. (Ezekiel 21:26, 27)

The beginning of the trampling

The Greek verb *pateō* ("tread on; trample") is rendered by Bible translations with future tense: "and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations" (NWT13). Would not the future tense contradict the view that the trampling already had begun some time ago and had continued for

21. See also Psalm 78:67–70, which indicates that a "tent" or "booth" may represent a dynasty of kings.

many years by the time Jesus gave the prophecy? Not necessarily. In the Christian Greek Scriptures, the future tense occurs 1,625 times, and of these, there are 18 examples of periphrastic future, i.e., constructions with a finite verb in the future tense followed by a participle. In Luke 21, we find 26 examples of simple future and three examples of periphrastic future. So, the question is whether there is a difference in meaning between simple future and periphrastic future in the Christian Greek Scriptures.

When we consider this question, we should keep in mind that rarely can we say something like: “Because of the use of this particular tense this author *must* mean . . .” We can better say: “The use of this particular tense *corroborates* this meaning . . .” Simple future and periphrastic future *can* have about the same meaning, and they *can* have different meanings as well. In Luke 21, the words of Jesus are quoted, and which form of the Hebrew or Aramaic verb could he have used in Luke 21:24? Because Luke only used periphrastic future in 2.6 percent of instances with future reference, i.e., Luke makes an exception in his default use of tense and deliberately shifts to periphrastic future, it is logical that the Hebrew or Aramaic verbs used in these instances had a different meaning compared with the verbs used in the other 97.4 percent instances.

We find an example that is a good parallel in 2 Samuel 7:16 (NWT84): “And your house and your kingdom will certainly be steadfast (LXX: simple future) to time indefinite before you; your very throne will become (LXX: future + perfect participle) one firmly established to time indefinite.” The important point in this passage is that at its time of writing, David already had ruled as a king for many years. Nevertheless, the passage says that his kingdom “will be steadfast” and “will become firmly established” to time indefinite. This shows that both Greek simple future and periphrastic future can refer to a future situation, which is already in place and has held for some time. Why did the Greek translator choose a periphrastic future in this verse? Probably because the Hebrew or Aramaic text has an imperfect of the verb “to be/become” plus a passive participle.

We also find an interesting example in Isaiah 47:7 (NWT84): “And you kept saying: To time indefinite I shall prove to be (LXX: future + present participle) the mistress, forever.” The daughter of the Chaldeans already was the mistress, but her wish was that this should continue forever. This is expressed in the LXX by a periphrastic future, but the Hebrew text has no participle, but only an imperfect of the verb “to be/become.” This

indicates that both Hebrew imperfect and imperfect plus participle and Greek simple future and periphrastic future can refer to a situation that both had already existed for some time and will continue into the future.

The problem in both languages is that there is no single verb form that can unambiguously convey that a situation has existed for some time and will continue into the future. This means that to signal such a thought, either two verbs (one referring to the past/present and one to the future) must be used, or the context together with the use of one verb or a combination of one finite verb and a participle could also signal that situation. A situation that has existed for a time and which will continue into the future is a special situation. The easiest way to signal such a situation would be to use a verb construction that is special (or rare) as well. The use of imperfect + participle is very rare in Hebrew, so when such a construction occurs, the reader may rightly expect something unusual. The same is true in Greek, where a future plus participle is rare. Thus, the rare use of a periphrastic future in Luke 21:24 would be a great way to signal that the trampling upon “Jerusalem” had lasted for some time and would continue into the future, than the use of a simple future. And because the periphrastic future is so rare in Greek, most probably it would be a translation of a Hebrew imperfect plus participle.²²

We also have some interesting examples in the Christian Greek Scriptures. In Acts 13:10 (NWT84) we read:

And Paul said: “O man full of every sort of fraud and every sort of villainy, you son of the Devil, you enemy of everything righteous, will you not quit distorting (future plus participle) the right ways of Jehovah?”

Clearly, the actions described by the periphrastic future in this verse do not solely refer to the future, because this man evidently had already distorted the ways of Jehovah for some time.

In Mark 13:13 (NW84), we read: “and you will be objects of hatred (future plus present participle) by all people on account of my name.” The disciples had already been an object of hatred when these words were uttered. And in Acts 6:4 (NWT84), we read: “but we shall devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” Most manuscripts have a simple future in this verse, but Codex Cantabrigiensis (D) has future plus present

22. If Jesus spoke Aramaic where imperfect plus participle is used more often than in Hebrew, the same argument would hold.

participle. The twelve had already “devoted themselves to prayer,” and they would continue to do so into the future as well.

The passages above show that a periphrastic future may describe a situation that already has lasted for some time, and at the same time, indicate that the situation will continue into the future. This shows that the expression “Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations,” which is expressed by a periphrastic future need not only refer to the future, but the trampling may have been occurring for some time already when Luke wrote his book.

The use of periphrastic future in the clause “and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations” may indicate that the trampling was going on already and would continue into the future.

The tree in Daniel chapter 4 and Luke 21:24

The book of Daniel is the only biblical book where the time of the conclusion (“end”) is mentioned, and nations coming and going on the world scene are put into a temporal frame relative to the Kingdom of God. (Daniel 2:36-45; 7:3-12; 8:3-25; 11:2-45; 12:7-13) The time of the coming of the Messiah, the king of God’s Kingdom is also mentioned (9: 24-27), and so it would be fitting if the time of the coming of the Messiah in the power of the Kingdom and the elevation of the booth of David would be mentioned as well.

The dream of Nebuchadnezzar II was given at a critical time in the history of God’s people when the Davidic dynasty was cut down, and the person who received the dream was the one who executed this as the acting servant of Jehovah. The subject of the dream is, according to Daniel 4:17 (NWT84), “that people living may know that the Most High is Ruler in the kingdom of mankind and that to the one whom he wants to, he gives it and he sets up over it even the lowliest one of mankind.” Clearly, the dream relates to the Kingdom of God!

Trees and twigs and stumps are often used to symbolize kingdoms and dynasties of kings. (Ezekiel 17:1-24; particularly v. 23) Isaiah 10:33-11:10 shows how trees that represent kingdoms will be cut down, but a twig out of the stump of Jesse will be fruitful. Also, in Jeremiah 23:5 and Zechariah 6:12-13, the Messiah is depicted as a sprout. In Isaiah 53:3, 7-9 Messiah is portrayed as “the lowliest of mankind (cf. Matthew 11:29), which fits the

description of “the lowliest of mankind,” whom God “sets up over” the kingdom. (Daniel 4:17)

Just as a city that is the capital of a kingdom can symbolize the whole kingdom; similarly, a tree can symbolize a kingdom.

The parallels between Daniel 4 and Luke 21

Based on the discussion above, we are now in the position that we can outline the parallels between Daniel 4:10–17 and Luke 21:24.

Table 1.3 Parallels between Daniel 4 and Luke 21

Jerusalem = the Kingdom of God.	The tree = the Kingdom of God.
Jerusalem is trampled on.	The tree is cut down.
The trampling occurs during the appointed times of the nations.	The stump of the tree is without sprouts during a period of seven appointed times.
Jerusalem will no longer be trampled upon after the appointed times of the nations have ended.	The stump of the tree will sprout after seven appointed times

The topical (thematic) parallel is seen in the table above, and the linguistic parallel is seen in the word *kairoi* (Aramaic *‘iddāniœn*) in Luke 21:24 which parallels *kairoi* (Theodotion)—(Aramaic *‘iddāniœn*) in Daniel 4:16, 23, 25, 32.

There is both a linguistic and a thematic parallel between “the appointed times” in Luke 21:24 and the “seven times” in Daniel chapter 4.

Because Luke 21:24 is a part of a prophecy, where only half of what we need is written, we must always be open for the possibility that our interpretation (the half we need to find ourselves, i.e., the intended application) is wrong.

However, the words of Jesus that his followers should understand his great prophecy also includes “the appointed times of the nations.” There are only three instances in the Hebrew Scriptures where “appointed time” is qualified by a number. And only the four instances of the Aramaic word *‘iddāniœn* (Greek, *kairoi*) in Daniel chapter 4 occur in a chapter where God’s Kingdom is mentioned. Therefore, because there is both a linguistic

and a topical (thematic) parallel between Luke 21:24 and Daniel chapter 4, our application of the times of the nations to the seven appointed times in Daniel chapter 4 has a strong backing.

THE CALCULATION OF THE APPOINTED TIMES OF THE NATIONS

If we accept that the “seven times” in Daniel chapter 4 represent “the appointed times of the nations,” we first must know how many days seven times represent. Revelation 11:2, 3 shows that 42 months represent 1,260 days, which is 30 days per month. In seven years, there are 84 months, which represent 2,520 days.

However, since the Davidic line of kings who represented the Kingdom of God was not restored a mere 2,520 days after Zedekiah was removed in 607 BCE, we must apply the prophetic rule that one day represents one year (Numbers 14:34; Ezekiel 4:6) so that the 2,520 days can scripturally have a greater fulfillment. In keeping with this, the seven appointed times would prophetically amount to 2,520 years.²³ We have seen in the discussion above that “the appointed times of the nations” is the time from the destruction of Jerusalem, when the last king of the dynasty of David reigned until God’s heavenly kingdom is established.

But how do we find the right starting point? Almost all lexicons and textbooks tell the readers that Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar II in 587 (or 586) BCE. If we count 2,520 years from this time, we arrive in 1934 (or 1935) when nothing unusual happened. However, if we start with 607 BCE and calculate 2,520 years, we arrive at the year 1914, which was the year of the start of World War I.

There is a common problem or tradition that we see in Academia, namely, that a conclusion that was drawn by a scholar 50, 100, or even 200 years ago is authoritatively repeated from generation to generation without ever being reexamined or scrutinized for accuracy. Please consider the following example:

“Spinach is good for your health because of its high iron content!” This claim has been repeated over and over again in nutrition books and health magazines in a great part of the 20th century. Cartoonists have made use of it for humorous design, and children have been fed, more or less against their will with this green. Yet the claim turns out to be wrong; its basis is a

23. As we will see below, the prophecy of 70 weeks to the coming of the Messiah must also be calculated on the basis that one day represents one year.

misunderstanding. Due to a typographical error by a printer of the decimal-point location in the 1920s, the iron content was placed ten times too high. The error was not discovered, because no one made an inquiry, until 1979 when G. W. Lohr of the University of Freiburg routinely checked the old numbers and found that they were wrong. It may be added that the iron of spinach is not in the form that the body easily can absorb.²⁴

The primary piece of evidence in favor of the year 587 is the Babylonian astronomical diary VAT4956. An article calculating astronomical positions on this tablet appeared in 1915,²⁵ and these calculations suggested that Nebuchadnezzar II destroyed Jerusalem in 587 BCE. For the next 70 years, the conclusions of Neugebauer and Weidner were used in all lexicons and textbooks, and no one published an article showing that they had made an independent translation of the tablet and checked the astronomical positions obtained in 1915. In 1988, an English translation of the tablet was published by H. Hunger.²⁶ This English translation made by Hunger was close to the German translation made 73 years earlier, but the volume has no astronomical calculations. From the comments at the end of the entry, it appears that the calculations made by Neugebauer and Weidner were accepted by Hunger.²⁷

In 2005, I visited the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin. I collated the tablet, and I took electronic pictures of its signs. I studied the tablet based on a magnification of each sign, and several signs were not clearly identifiable. Particularly many of the celestial bodies that were connected with the planets were difficult to identify. I discovered that Neugebauer and Weidner had made all their calculations starting one day wrong, and the comments of Hunger shows that he had followed suit.

On the basis of my study of VAT4956 and several other relevant astronomical tablets, I wrote a book dealing with the Neo-Babylonian Chronology.²⁸ I calculated the 14 lunar positions on VAT4956, and my conclusion for the year 568/567, which is the year pointed to by

24. *Science Digest*, February 1979:16.

25. Neugebauer and Weidner, "Ein astronomischer Beobachtungstext aus dem 37. Jahre Nebukadnesars II (567/566)."

26. Sachs and Hunger, *Astronomical Diaries and Related Texts From Babylonia*, Volume I, (1988).

27. Hunger has never collated the tablet VAT4956; he made his translation based on black and white pictures of the tablet taken before World War II.

28. Furuli, *Assyrian, Babylonian, and Egyptian Chronology*, II:45–249; 342–416.

Neugebauer and Weidner and Hunger, is that seven of the positions have an excellent fit, five do not fit at all, and two are inaccurate. But all the 14 lunar positions have an excellent fit twenty years earlier, in the year 588/87.²⁹ This suggests that Nebuchadnezzar II conquered Jerusalem in 607 BCE and not in 587 BCE.

The excellent fit of the 14 lunar positions on VAT4956 in the year 588/87, which is year 37 of Nebuchadnezzar II, suggests that year 18 of Nebuchadnezzar II, when Jerusalem was destroyed, is 607 BCE.

I have also studied cuneiform business tablets dated to the kings of the Neo-Babylonian Empire. And 90 of these tablets have dates indicating that each Neo-Babylonian king reigned longer than the traditional chronology allows. This means that the traditional chronology is destroyed, and the dated tablets support the view that the Neo-Babylonian Empire is 20 years longer than the chronology found in lexicons and textbooks.

My book shows that there is strong evidence in favor of the view of JW of 607 BCE being the year when Jerusalem was destroyed.

THIS GENERATION WILL BY NO MEANS PASS AWAY

A number of the readers of the first edition of this book who have found the book interesting, have expressed doubts about the explanation of JW regarding the generation that by no means will pass away (Matthew 24:34) before the great tribulation begins.

While I question some of the new explanations of the parables of Jesus that have been given by the Governing Body in the 21st century, I find the explanation of the generation to be excellent or even brilliant.

The problem can be illustrated by playing crossword puzzles. You are looking for a word with eight letters in a horizontal line. You have four of the letters of the word because of the crossing of four vertical lines. There are many words with eight letters, but because of the four letters you have and the particular meaning of the eight-letter word, you are able to find the right word. If you did not have any of the crossing vertical lines, or just one or two of them, it would not be easy to find the right word.

29. The parameters of each lunar position are listed in my book so that they can be checked by any Astro-program.

I will now consider the Greek word *genea* (generation). Among the definitions in the Greek lexicon of Louw and Nida we find:

- 1) An ethnic group exhibiting cultural similarities.
- 2) Successive following generations of those who are biologically related to a reference person—posterity, descendants, offspring.
- 3) People living at the same time, and belonging to the same reproductive age—class ‘those of the same time, those of the same generation.’

The Hebrew word for generation is *dōr*, and among the meanings given by the Brown, Driver, and Briggs Hebrew-English lexicon are:

- 1) Period, age, generation, a) of duration in the past, b) usually of duration to come, c) apparently including both past and future.
- 2) Of men living at a particular time (period, age).
- 3) Generation characterized by quality or condition, *class* of men.

We see that the meanings of the Greek *genea* and the Hebrew *dōr* are quite similar.

To use the crossword example, we need a definition on our horizontal line. But do we have any clues by the crossing of vertical lines? There is one important clue, namely, the demonstrative “this.” It needs an antecedent, and it is difficult to escape the conclusion that “this generation” existed during the time when the sign of Jesus’ presence was seen. In other words, “this generation” existed when the first part of the sign was seen, and it would continue to exist until the great tribulation. This shows that *genea* refers to a particular time period.

In the first part of the 20th century, there were no clues apart from the one mentioned. The words of Jesus were taken to mean that the time until the great tribulation was short, and this was logical. When I became a Witness in 1961, the words of Psalm 90:10 was applied to the word *genea*. “The span of our lives is 70 years. Or 80 if one is specifically strong.” (NWT13) This application was logical, because the Hebrew word *dōr* (generation) is mentioned in verse 1, and because there had lapsed 47 years from 1914 in 1961. Thus, there were two vertical words in the crossword that seemed to support this interpretation.

However, in 1994, 80 years had elapsed from 1914, and this showed that Psalm 90:10 could not be used as a clue for pinpointing “this

generation.” The leading brothers of the Watchtower Society at this time followed the true path of interpreting prophecies. When the present understanding had shown to be wrong, they tried to find another interpretation. Two different understandings followed. But in time, it was realized that both were wrong. The brothers cannot be criticized for this because there is no other way to understand prophecies than to search for meaning. And when it is realized that one explanation is wrong, true Christians must look for another explanation.

Today, 108 years have elapsed since 1914. If we believe in the presence of Jesus and the sign of this presence, only a definition of “this generation” that fit these 108 years must be given—this is yet another vertical “word” in our crossword. *The Watchtower* of April, 15, 2010, page 10 says:

In his detailed prophecy about the conclusion of this system of things, Jesus said: “This generation will by no means pass away until all these things happen.” (Read Matthew 24:33-35) We understand that in mentioning “this generation,” Jesus was referring to two groups of anointed Christians. The first group was on hand in 1914, and they readily discerned the sign of Christ’s presence in that year.—Rom. 8:14-17.

The second group included in “this generation” are anointed contemporaries of the first group. They were simply alive during the lifetime of those in the first group, but they were anointed with holy spirit during the time that those of the first group were still on earth. Thus, not every anointed person today is included in “this generation” of whom Jesus spoke. Today, those in the second group are themselves advancing in years. Yet, Jesus’ words at Matthew 24:34 give us confidence that at least some of “this generation will by no means pass away” before seeing the start of the great tribulation. This should add to our conviction that little time remains before the King of God’s Kingdom acts to destroy the wicked and usher in a righteous new world.

A fine chart of the two groups is found in *Close to the End of This System of Things Our Christian Life and Ministry*—Meeting workbook—2018.

If we now return to the crossword example, do we have several vertical “words” that confirm this horizontal explanation? Yes, there are several.

- 1) The present definition accords with the basic meaning of *genea* and *dōr*. Some Hebrew examples: Genesis 6:9 (contemporaries, *dōr*); 7:1 (this generation, *dōr*); Exodus 1:6 (that generation, *dōr*). Greek examples: Matthew 11:6; 12:41 (“this generation,” *genea*); 12:45, “this wicked generation,” Matthew 12:45).

- 2) The presence of Jesus and the first part of the sign of this presence began in 1914, and this generation will encompass the presence and still be here when the great tribulation comes. Therefore, “this generation” must be more than 108 years.
- 3) The people of God are Jehovah’s Witnesses, and this is the only group that has anointed and non-anointed Christians. Only anointed Christians existed in the first part of Christ’s presence. Therefore, the generation must refer to anointed Christians.
- 4) A great number of prophecies have been fulfilled on Jehovah’s Witnesses from 1914. If “this generation” does not include the year 1914 and the great tribulation, the understanding of these fulfillments must be wrong. However, many of these fulfillments, such as 1,290, days, 1335 days, 2,300 evenings and mornings, and tree times and a half are fulfilled in such detail that they strongly corroborate the present view of “this generation.”

Because of all these vertical “words” in the crossword that confirm the interpretation of the horizontal “word,” I view the present understanding of “this generation” as brilliant.

THE 70 WEEKS IN DANIEL CHAPTER 9 AND THE SOJOURN OF JESUS ON THE EARTH

The word *mās̄iʿāh* (“the anointed one”) occurs 38 times in the OT. In 37 instances, the word is qualified and is pointing to priests or kings who were anointed. Only in one instance, in Daniel chapter 9, do we find *mās̄iʿāh* without qualification. Therefore, this word must refer to **the** Messiah, the Anointed One that God would send. In Daniel 9:23–27 (NIV), we read:

²³ Therefore, consider the message and understand the vision:

²⁴ “Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

²⁵ “Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. ²⁶ After the sixty-two ‘sevens,’ the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will

destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed.²⁷ He will confirm a covenant with many for one ‘seven.’ In the middle of the ‘seven’ he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing [of the temple] he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him.”³⁰

The prophecy of the 70 weeks can be calculated in the same way as the seven appointed times of the nations. One week of seven days represents seven years and 69 weeks until the coming of the Messiah represent 483 years.

However, the calculation of the 70 weeks has caused commentators great problems because year 20 of Artaxerxes I, which is connected with “the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem,” is believed to be 445 BCE. If we calculate 483 years from this year, we come to 39 CE, and nothing unusual happened in this year. In contrast with most others, JW claim that year 20 of Artaxerxes I was 455 BCE. If we calculate from this year, we come to the year 29 CE, the very year when Jesus Christ started his preaching work.

I have written a book where I show that year 455 as the 20th year of Artaxerxes I has very strong support.³¹ I have calculated the positions of all the relevant astronomical tablets and studied the dated business tablets and the Persepolis tablets. The conclusion is that Cambyses reigned eight years, one year more than given by the traditional chronology. There were five years between Cambyses and Darius I, when Bardiya, Nebuchadnezzar III, and Nebuchadnezzar IV reigned. The conventional chronology has 0 years between Cambyses and Darius I. Artaxerxes I started to reign in 475 and not in 465, and he reigned for 51 years, which is 10 years more than accepted by the traditional chronology. If we use 455 BCE as our starting point, we see that 483 years end in the year 29 CE, when Jesus Christ started his preaching.

30. A detailed analysis including the fulfillment of Daniel 9:24–27 is found in Furuli, *When Was the Book of Daniel Written?, A Philological, Linguistic, and Historical Approach*, 198–214.

31. Furuli, *Persian Chronology and the Length of the Babylonian Exile of the Jews*, 239–283. 316–397.

Cuneiform tablets and historical evidence indicate that the 70 weeks began in the year 455 BCE.

The Watchtower of February 15, 2014, page 26, does not rule out the possibility that people in the days of Jesus could calculate the 70 weeks and understand that they ended in 29 CE. But the magazine argues that most likely they could not calculate these weeks. The arguments in the magazine are, in my view, weak. A prophecy is given to illuminate the people of God. (Romans 15:4) So, if the prophecy about 69 weeks until the arrival of the Messiah was not understood, there was no purpose for the prophecy. Moreover, Daniel 9:25 starts with the words: “And you shall **know and understand**.”

Luke 3:15 (NIV) says: “The people **were waiting expectantly** and were all wondering in their hearts if John might possibly be the Christ.” John the Baptist started his work in the year before Jesus, or in the year 29, when Jesus began his work. Luke shows that the people at that time were “waiting expectantly” for the Messiah. *The Watchtower* argues that this expectation was based on the testimony of the shepherds when Jesus was born, and the situation with the astrologers at a later time. But if the people were aware of the birth of the Messiah, then the Messiah had already come, so why should they continue to be “waiting expectantly” for the Messiah? Moreover, why would the people expect the Messiah 30 years after his birth?

The only place where **the** Messiah is mentioned in the Hebrew Scriptures is in Daniel 9:25, and “**ho kebristos**” (“**the** Christ”), which is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew *maʿas̄iʿaʿhΩ*, was used by Luke. This suggests that Luke and the people had Daniel 9:25 in mind. The beginning of the Zadokite document from Qumran says:

And at the end of the wrath of 390 years from [the time when] he punished them by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babel. . . . For 20 years, they had been blind, like those who are groping for the way. . . . Then he caused a teacher of righteousness to guide them in the way of his heart.³²

The mentioned time started when Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, which was 607 BCE.³³ If we count 390 years from this

32. The *Damascus Document* (CD) 1:4–11. Translated by R. J. Furuli.

33. See pages 56, 57.

year, we come to 217 BCE. By adding 20 years more, we come to the year 197 BCE. Then the teacher of righteousness came into the scene, and the Qumran community was established. The quoted words show that the Qumran community could calculate the correct time, year by year, back to the days of Nebuchadnezzar II. And other people could, of course, do the same.

Time could be calculated into the past in two ways, 1) by the use of the Seleucid calendar, which started in 312 BCE, when Seleucus Nicator conquered Babylon, and 2) by counting sabbath years. In 1 Maccabees 4:52, for example, we read about the one hundred and forty-eighth year of the Seleucid calendar.

The word of Nehemiah to restore and build Jerusalem was uttered in year 20 of Artaxerxes I when Nehemiah arrived in Jerusalem. (Nehemiah 2:1–8) The actions of Nehemiah of reading the whole law (8:18), which should be done on the Festival of Booths in the sabbath year, suggest that this year was a sabbath year. The releasing events mentioned in 5:7–12 support this conclusion. If this is correct, the Jews could simply count the sabbath years, and including the Jubilee years, back to Nehemiah’s arrival in Jerusalem, and find the beginning of the 483 years (69 weeks).

Josephus wrote his books at the end of the first century CE. He mentions several sabbatical years in BCE, and this indicates that he must have had lists of sabbatical years.³⁴

The Zadokite document, 1 Maccabees, and the Antiquities of Josephus show that the Jews could calculate the time back to the destruction of Jerusalem based on the Seleucid calendar and the counting of sabbath years.

The evidence suggests that the people in the first part of the 1st century CE could calculate the 70 weeks, and therefore the people were “waiting expectantly” for the Messiah when John the Baptist started his work.

PROPHETIC PERIODS IN THE TIME OF THE CONCLUSION (END)

Paul says, “For all the things that were written aforetime were written for our instruction.” (Romans 15:4, NWT84) This means that every word in

34. Sabbath years mentioned by Josephus: Year 134 BCE, Antiquities 13.8.1 (13.2.30); 43 BCE(?), 14.10.6 (14.206); 36 BCE, 14.15.2 (14.470, 475).

the Bible will be understood at the right time. And this must also include time periods that are applied to the people of God.

Revelation 11:2–7 shows that two witnesses were clothed in sackcloth for 42 months, or 1,260 days. After this period, they would be killed. The actions of the two witnesses show that they represent Moses and Elijah. And therefore, the two witnesses are not two individuals. But they represent the people of God in the time of the conclusion. Daniel 12:7 mentions a similar time period of 3 1/2 times, after which the hand of the holy people will be shattered, and 7:25 mentions the same time period. Because the context of Revelation chapter 11 shows that the time period relates to the time of the conclusion (end), each day cannot represent one year, but the period must be literal days.

Daniel chapter 12 shows that two more periods are related to the people of God when verse 12 (NIV) says: “Blessed is the one who waits for and reaches the end of the 1,335 days.” This shows that the time periods relate to the members of the holy ones, to the people of God. Verse 11 speaks of a period of 1,290 days, and a period of 2,300 evenings and mornings concerning the holy place is mentioned in Daniel 8:13, 14.

In this chapter, I have quoted passages from the Bible, showing that there is only one true religion. Then I argued that, based on the beliefs and actions, this true religion is the religion of Jehovah’s Witnesses. The time periods mentioned in the books of Revelation and Daniel are in their contexts applied to “the holy ones,” which are the people of God. In the literature of JW, different periods of 1,260, 1,290, 1,335, and 2,300 days are applied to their history after 1914. I have carefully studied the discussions of these time periods, and all of them seem to fit very well into the history of JW. However, we must always make the reservation that only half of the data—the time periods—occur in the Bible, and in finding the other half—the fulfillments—there is the possibility that we err.³⁵

THE RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS

The Creator of the universe, Jehovah God, has a purpose. In connection with this purpose, Peter said in Acts 3:20–21 (NWT84):

35. The following sources discuss the fulfillments of the time prophecies: *The Watchtower* of September 15, 1982, 16, 17; *Pay Attention to Daniel’s Prophecy*, 297–304; *Our Incoming World Government—Gods Kingdom* (“Marked days during the time of the end”); *The Watchtower* of November 15, 2014, 30, and January 15, 2001, 28, 29.

²⁰ And that he may send forth the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, ²¹ whom heaven, indeed, must hold within itself until the times of restoration of all things of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets of old time.

The word “restoration” is translated from the Greek word *apokatastasis*, whose meaning, according to Louw and Nida is: “to change to a previous good state—‘to restore, to cause again to be, restoration.’” One of Jehovah’s prophets was Isaiah, and in connection with restoration, his words are:

“Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.” (65:17, NIV)

We note that the restoration does not include only one but two things, namely, new heavens and a new earth. The apostle Peter also speaks about new heavens and a new earth. (2 Peter 3:13) The planet earth will never be destroyed. But there will be a restoration; the paradise that was lost will be restored, as Jesus said in Luke 23:43. One of the doctrines that is unique to JW that I discussed above is that two different classes will be saved because of the ransom of Jesus. In Hebrews 2:5, we read about “the coming inhabited earth.” And this is the basic message in the enormous preaching campaign of JW worldwide. Sincere persons are asked to be reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:20) Such a reconciliation means that they can be a part of the great crowd who will come out of (survive) the great tribulation (Revelation 7:14), and they can live forever in the restored paradise on earth.

Not only will the earthly paradise be restored, but “new heavens” will also be created. A few verses after the words about “the coming inhabited earth” in Hebrews 2:5, we read about those with “the heavenly calling” (3:1). In Philippians 3:20 (NIV), Paul says, “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.” As I have shown above, some Christians have the heavenly calling, and their citizenship is in heaven.

Why will some Christians get a heavenly resurrection? Revelation 7:4 speaks of a group of 144,000 in contrast with the great crowd without number. Revelation 14:1–4 again mentions the group of 144,000, and verse 4 says that “they are purchased from among men.” They are standing on the heavenly mount Zion, and this suggests that they are taken to heaven to form a government because Psalm 110:2 shows that Jesus will

rule from Zion. In addition to becoming a part of the heavenly government, there is another purpose for their heavenly calling. Revelation 20:6 (NIV) says:

Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.

This shows that a group, numbering 144,000, will be bought from among mankind to become priests and kings together with Jesus Christ. During the mentioned 1,000 years the earthly resurrection will occur, and gradually those who have survived the great tribulation and those who have been resurrected will become perfect. The members of the heavenly government will serve as priests and help those who are on the earth to progress toward perfection.

That humans who have died but who did not get the opportunity to accept or reject Jesus' ransom sacrifice will get a resurrection during the Thousand Year Reign of Jesus and then have this opportunity is a unique teaching of JW. Most of the humans who have lived on the earth will get a resurrection. The righteousness of God requires that every person who has lived on the earth gets a minimum chance to choose everlasting life.

The chronology of "the appointed times of the nations" that is discussed above indicates that the Kingdom of God with Jesus as king was established in 1914 CE. The peace was taken away from the earth at that time, and the different parts of the sign of the presence of Jesus, including the preaching of the good news of the Kingdom worldwide, have been seen. Because JW believe that Jesus presently is reigning as king, we behave like ambassadors and strive not to be a part of this world whose god is Satan the Devil. We believe that in this generation, Jesus will come as the judge. We do not know the day and hour, but we are eagerly waiting for the coming of Jesus in the great tribulation. And this means that some persons who are alive today will survive the great tribulation and continue to live in the paradise earth as perfect humans. And, as John 11:25, 26 says. They will never die!

THE FAITHFUL AND DISCREET SLAVE

—REVIEW—

In Matthew, chapters 24 and 25, the presence (*parousia*) of Jesus from 1914 to the great tribulation is mentioned four times, and his coming (*erkebomai*) as the judge during the great tribulation, at the end of his presence, is mentioned seven times.

The faithful and discreet slave is mentioned in Matthew 24:45-47. The previous view of the GB was that *the coming* of the master (v. 46) occurred in 1918, and the slave was appointed over all his belongings in 1919. These belongings included the branch offices, the Kingdom Halls, and the preaching work. The present view is that *the coming* (v. 46) is future and will happen during the great tribulation. Then the slave will be appointed over all the belongings upon receiving a heavenly resurrection.

This new view excludes any connection between *the coming* (v. 46) and the presence of Jesus. Nevertheless, *The Watchtower* of 2017 says that the slave was appointed in 1919 to give God's servants spiritual food at the proper time during the presence of Jesus. But no evidence has been given for this claim.

Luke 12:35-44 discusses the faithful steward, the discreet one, which, according to the context, is the same as the faithful and discreet slave in Matt 24:45. In the illustration mentioned in Luke chapter 12, one slave was put in charge of a master's household to give the other slaves literal food at the appointed time. And when he is found to be faithfully carrying out his assignment of giving the other slaves food when the master returned, thus doing his job, he would be appointed over all the belongings of the master.

The situation is the same in the shortened version of the illustration in Matthew 24:45-47. That the slave gives literal food to the other slaves is his job. When he is found to be doing this job faithfully when the Lord arrives during the great tribulation, he will be appointed over all the master's belongings. The focus in the illustration is on literal food and not on spiritual food. Thus, "the slave" refers to individual Christians who are faithful when the master arrives and not to a class of persons.

In Matthew 24:48-51, the wicked slave is mentioned. The GB says that Jesus is not saying that a wicked slave *will come*, but merely warns of the possibility; this is correct. However, neither in Luke 12:42 nor in Matthew 24:45 is Jesus saying that the faithful and discreet slave *will come*. But Jesus asks who will turn out to be a faithful and discreet slave at the time Jesus comes. The whole setting in Luke 12 and Matthew 24 is: "Who will be on the watch when Jesus comes as the judge"?

The conclusion is that there has been no “faithful and discreet slave” entity or group who has been commissioned to give out spiritual food at the proper time during the presence of Jesus in the sense the GB is using the term. Thus, the legacy of the GB is non-existent.

The words about “the faithful and discreet slave” are written in Matthew 24:45-47, and they are a part of the great prophecy of Jesus about his presence and his coming as the judge at the end of his presence.

⁴⁵ “Who really is the faithful and discreet slave whom his master appointed over his domestics, to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ Happy is that slave if his master on coming finds him doing so! ⁴⁷ Truly I say to you, he will appoint him over all his belongings.

THE NEW VIEW OF THE “COMING” OF JESUS SHOWS THAT THERE IS NO “FAITHFUL AND DISCREET SLAVE”

Since the days of C. T. Russell and the first Bible Students, the words about the faithful and discreet slave have been applied to the anointed Christians who would give other Christians spiritual food at the proper time. In 1961, when I became a Witness, the whole prophecy in Matthew, chapters 24 and 25, including the separation of the sheep from the goats, was applied to the presence of Jesus from 1914 and to the great tribulation. Therefore, most Witnesses had no problems in accepting that “the slave” was the group of the anointed ones who gave spiritual food to sincere persons *during the presence* of Jesus — these appeared to be the facts on the ground. In a way, this was a sequel to Matthew 25:31-46. The spiritual food given by the slave included the preaching, and this preaching separated the believers (the sheep) from the non-believers (the goats) during Christ’s presence. The understanding of the account of the sheep and the goats was changed in 1997.³⁶ The view is now that this separation occurs during the great tribulation.

In Matthew 24:30, 42, 44, 46, the coming (*erkhomai*) of Jesus is mentioned four times.³⁷ And together with Matthew 25:10, 19, 27, and 31, the word “coming” occurs eight times. The time application of each of

36. *The Watchtower* of May 15, 1997. The text in italics represents what I find particularly important.

37. The Greek word *erkhomai* means “coming,” and the word *parousia* means “presence.”

these has not always been clear. But *The Watchtower* of July 15, 2013, page 8, applied all the eight occurrences of “coming” to the great tribulation. We read:

¹⁷ In the past, we have stated in our publications that these last four references apply to Jesus’ arriving, or coming, in 1918. As an example, take Jesus’ statement about “the faithful and discreet slave.” (Read Matthew 24:45-47) We understood that the “arriving” mentioned in verse 46 was linked to the time when Jesus came to inspect the spiritual condition of the anointed in 1918 and that the appointment of the slave over all the Master’s belongings occurred in 1919. (Mal. 3:1) However, further consideration of Jesus’ prophecy indicates that an adjustment in our understanding of the timing of certain aspects of Jesus’ prophecy is needed. Why so?

¹⁸ In the verses that lead up to Matthew 24:46, the word “coming” refers consistently to the time when Jesus comes to pronounce and execute judgment during the great tribulation. (Matt. 24:30, 42, 44) Also, as we considered in paragraph 12, Jesus’ ‘arriving’ mentioned in Matthew 25:31 refers to that same future time of judgment. *So it is reasonable to conclude that Jesus’ arrival to appoint the faithful slave over all his belongings, mentioned at Matthew 24:46, 47, also applies to his future coming, during the great tribulation. Indeed, a consideration of Jesus’ prophecy in its entirety makes it clear that each of these eight references to his coming applies to the future time of judgment during the great tribulation.* (My italics.)

Table 2.1 *The eight passages that refer to the great tribulation*

24:30	The Son of man will be coming (<i>present participle</i>).
24:42	The Lord will be coming (<i>present indicative</i>).
24:44	The Son of man will be coming (<i>present indicative</i>).
24:46	His lord *will having come* (<i>aorist active participle</i>).
25:10	The bridegroom came (<i>aorist indicative</i>).
25:19	The lord was coming (<i>present indicative</i>).
25:27	When I *will having come* (<i>aorist active participle</i>). ³⁸
25:31	The Son of man will come (<i>aorist subjunctive</i>).

The application of all the eight occurrences of “coming” to the same short time in the future, to the great tribulation, is logical. But because one

38. The asterisks in 24:46 and 25:27 indicate that the words in-between represent a word-for-word translation and not good idiomatic English.

of the examples occurs in Matthew 24:46 in connection with the faithful and discreet slave, this understanding of “coming” also affects the view of the slave’s temporal relation to the presence of Jesus. If the word “coming” in Matthew 24:46 refers to the great tribulation, the faithful and discreet slave could not have been appointed in the year 1919, as the GB claims. But so far, the GB has not admitted this!

However, as I will show below, one of the eight occurrences of “coming” cannot be applied to the great tribulation. This is the occurrence of “coming” in Matthew 25:31. For most of the history of JW, it was understood that a primary reason for the preaching work of JW was to provide a basis for people to be separated into two groups — either sheep or goats — depending on their response to the message. As mentioned earlier, this understanding was changed in 1997. Now the view is that this separation would not occur during the presence of Jesus but in the great tribulation. In my article, “‘For many are called but few are chosen’ — What the members of the Governing Body so not understand” I show in detail that the illustration about the sheep and the goats have been fulfilled from the beginning of the presence of Jesus in the year 1914. I also show that while the sheep are sincere persons who have taken their stand for God because of the preaching of Jehovah’s Witnesses, the goats are persons who have been a part of, or have been affiliated with the Witnesses and not all the nations of the world

In spite of the fact that the GB’s new understanding of Jesus’ coming transfers the connection of the “faithful slave” from Jesus’ presence to his future coming in the great tribulation, *The Watchtower* of February 2017, pages 25, 26, maintains that the slave was appointed in 1919, during Jesus’ presence, and from that time, the slave has given spiritual food at the proper time:

In 1919, three years after Brother Russell’s death, Jesus appointed “the faithful and discreet slave.” For what purpose? To give his domestics “food at the proper time.” (Matt. 24:45) Even in those early years, a small group of anointed brothers who served at headquarters in Brooklyn, New York, prepared and distributed spiritual food to Jesus’ followers. The expression “governing body” began appearing in our publications in the 1940’s, when it was understood to be closely connected with the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. However, in 1971, the Governing Body was distinguished from the Watch Tower Society—a legal instrument rather than a Scriptural entity—and its directors. The Governing Body henceforth included anointed brothers who were not

Society directors. In recent years, responsible brothers of the “other sheep” have served as directors of the legal Society and of other corporations used by God’s people, thus allowing the Governing Body to focus on providing spiritual instruction and direction. (John 10:16; Acts 6:4) *The July 15, 2013, issue of The Watchtower explained that “the faithful and discreet slave” is a small group of anointed brothers who make up the Governing Body.* (My italics.)

The claim that the faithful and discreet slave was appointed in 1919 to distribute spiritual food contradicts the whole setting of the prophecy of Jesus, as well as the near context. There is no explanation and no arguments in the quotation above, only a claim. And this claim is, of course, necessary to uphold the authority of the GB. One other problem, you might say “the elephant in the room,” is that in the year 1919, there was no GB nor anything akin to it. It was president J.F. Rutherford who made most of the decisions. And he wrote all the books and booklets, as well as many articles in *The Watchtower*. From 1942 on, president N.H. Knorr made most of the decisions, and the vice president F.W. Franz wrote or directed the writing of the literature.

The Watchtower of September 15, 1950, pages 315, 316, shows that it was the president who started the work with a new Bible translation, and when the manuscript was finished, he informed the board of directors of the project.

Particularly since 1946 the president of the Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society has been in quest of such a translation [a clear and accurate translation] of the Christian Greek Scriptures. On September 3, 1949, at 8 a.m., at the Brooklyn headquarters (Bethel) the Society's president convened a joint meeting of the boards of directors of the Pennsylvania and New York corporations, only one director being absent. After the meeting was opened with prayer the president announced to these eight fellow directors the existence of a “New World Bible Translation Committee” and that it had completed a translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures. This it had turned over to the possession and control of the Watch Tower Bible & Tract Society, Pennsylvania corporation, On February 9, 1950, the New World Bible just the preceding day.

Supporting the fact that the board of directors was not a Governing Body is the Walsh case in Scotland in 1954, where the following exchange occurred between F.W. Franz (F) and the judge (J):

Q. In matters spiritual has each member of the Board of Directors an equally valid voice? A. The president is the mouthpiece. He pronounces the speeches that show advancement of the understanding of the Scriptures.

Then he may appoint other members of the headquarters temporarily to give other speeches that set forth any part of the Bible upon which further light has been thrown. Q. Tell me; are these advances, as you put it, voted upon by the Directors? A. No. Q. How do they become pronouncements? A. 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. Q. Does it not go before the Board of Directors at all? A. No.

It is clear that there was no Governing Body in 1954. Included in the new understanding that the GB is the “faithful and discreet slave” is the view that no one man on the GB is ‘the slave,’ but only when they make collective unanimous decisions as a group do they act in that capacity. In keeping with this, by no stretch of the imagination can such a definition of ‘the slave’ be retro applied prior to the institution of the GB in 1971, where from 1919 until 1971 only one man, the president of the Watchtower society, had the final say in all decisions. Indeed, a governing body in the sense of a group of equals who discuss different issues, and as a body make decisions, was first established in 1971. Therefore, logically, the faithful and discreet slave could not have been appointed in 1919, when there was no GB and no group of anointed acting as a collective person or entity who distributed spiritual food.

Below follows a detailed discussion of the context of the words about the faithful and discreet slave in Matthew 24:45-47 and about “the faithful manager, the wise one” in Luke 12:42-46. This discussion will support the view that there has never been a “faithful and discreet slave class” in the sense used by the GB today.

“THE FAITHFUL AND DISCREET SLAVE” IN CONTEXT

The Watchtower of February, 15, 1994, pages 8-21, helps us to understand the setting of the context because the verses of Matthew 24, Luke 21, and Mark 13 are put side by side and compared in this magazine.

THE BIGGER CONTEXT OF MATTHEW 24:45-47

The important point of departure is Luke 21:24b because, in this verse, the appointed times of the nations are discussed. The verses in Luke 21:7–24a must refer to events in the first century CE, with a bigger fulfillment in the 20th century during Christ’s presence. And the verses from 21:25–36 must refer to events after the end of the appointed times of the nations, more

precisely to the great tribulation. The verses in Matthew 24 and Mark 13 follow the pattern set by Luke 21.

Table 2.2 A comparison between the settings of Matthew 24, Luke 21, and Mark 13

Luke 21:8–24a—great distress	Matthew 24:3–22—great tribulation	Mark 13:5–20—great tribulation
<i>Luke 21:24b—appointed times, ending in 1914</i>	<i>Matthew 24:23–28—time period ending in 1914</i>	<i>Mark 13:21–23—time period ending in 1914</i>
Luke 21:25–36—celestial phenomena—keep awake.	Matthew 24:29–51—celestial phenomena—keep awake.	Mark 13:24–37—celestial phenomena—keep awake.

The verses in the top boxes relate to the first century until 70 CE when Jerusalem was destroyed. The verses in the middle boxes describe events that occurred after 70 CE and until 1914 CE. And the bottom boxes relate to events that will occur during the great tribulation. But we may ask why the bottom boxes (Luke 21:25-36; Matthew 24:29-51; Mark 13:24-37) all relate to the great tribulation when all the events described in the top boxes occurred before 1914? The answer may be that the events described by the top boxes and happening in the 1st century are shadows of similar but bigger events that would occur during the presence of Jesus. After the fulfillment of these events comes the great tribulation that is described in the bottom boxes.

The important point to note is that the setting of the verses of Matthew 24:29–51, Luke 21:25–36, and Mark 13:24–37 is the great tribulation and not Christ’s presence.

A COMPARISON BETWEEN LUKE 12:42–44 AND MATTHEW 24:45–47

The verses of our interest are Matthew 24:45–47, and according to the context, the events described by these verses must occur during the great tribulation. These verses parallel Luke 12:42–46, and I will translate the verses and compare them:

Table 2.3 A comparison of the words of Luke 12:42-44 and Matthew 24:45-46

Luke 12:42

Who then (*tis ara*) will be (*estin*, **present**) the faithful steward (*oikonomos*), the wise one, whom the Lord will appoint (*kathistēmi*, **future**) over his household of slaves (*therapeia*) in order to continue to give (*didomi*, **pres infin**) their food allowance (*sitometrion*) at the appointed time (*kairos*)?

Matthew 24:45

Who then (*tis ara*) will be (*estin*, **present**) the faithful slave (*doulos*), even the wise one, whom the Lord will appoint (*kathistēmi*, **aoist**) over his household of slaves (*oiketeia*) in order to give (*didomi*, **aoist infin**) their food (*trofē*) at the appointed time (*kairos*).

Luke 12:43, 44

⁴³ Happy is that slave (*doulos*) whom the Lord will find (**future**) doing (**present part**) this when he comes (**aoist part**). ⁴⁴ Truly I am telling (**present**) you that he will appoint him (*kathistēmi*, **future**) over all his belongings (*hyparxō*, **pres part**).

Matthew 24:46, 47

Happy is that slave (*doulos*) whom the Lord will find (**future**) doing (**present part**) this when he comes (**aoist part**). Indeed, I am telling (**present**) you that he will appoint him (*kathistēmi*, **future**) over all his belongings (*hyparxō*, **pres part**).

The verses in Luke 12 and Matthew 24 are very similar. In Luke 12:42, the person is called “steward” (*oikonomos*), which refers to the slave who is in charge of the household of the master. This is confirmed in verse 43, where the steward is called “slave” (*doulos*). In the parallel in Matthew 24:45, the person is called “slave” (*doulos*). So the situation is exactly the same in both instances. The duties of such slaves were to arrange the meals and give the other slaves the food that they should have at the appointed times of the meals. Luke 12:42 uses the word “food allowance” (*sitometrion*)—what the slaves rightly should have—and in Matthew 24:45 uses the word “food” (*trofē*). This word can also refer to a “portion,” so there is no real difference between the two words.

In the epithets of the slave, there is the conjunction *kai* (“and”) in Matthew. But this word is lacking in Luke. Literally, Matthew says: “who is the faithful slave *and* the wise (one).” In Greek, the conjunction *kai* needs not always be translated as “and.” In Galatians 5:16, for example, a good translation would be “even,” and I use this translation in Matthew 24:45.

In connection with the duty of the slave and his appointment, Luke uses the verb *kathistēmi* in the future, while Matthew uses the same verb in the

aorist. It is clear from the use of aorist in the Christian Greek Scriptures that it can refer to completed and uncompleted actions. Therefore, there is no linguistic reason to use English past tense or perfect for the aorist verb “appoint” in Matthew 24:45 and to use future in Luke 12:42.

The Greek form *estin* is the present form of the verb *eimi* (“to be”). Greek present is not a tense but the imperfective aspect, and it can be used for past, present, and future. Because Jesus asks a question about a situation that has not yet materialized, and he uses the future form *kathistēmi*, the temporal reference of *estin* must be future. Therefore, I translate “Who then *will be* the faithful steward/slave?” and not “Who then *is* the faithful steward/slave?”

Moreover, in Luke 12:35–40, Jesus admonishes his listeners to be ready. And as his reply to Peter’s question whether Jesus’ illustration only refers to the disciples or to all people, Jesus, in effect, asks: “Who will it be?”³⁹ This means that each individual must decide, and the appointment as a steward must occur *after* the individual has made his or her decision. Because the words in Matthew 24:45–47 are very similar to the words in Luke 12:42–45, the setting must be the same, namely, who will be on the watch when Jesus comes. This is confirmed by the words in Mark 13:33–37, which are very similar to the words in Luke 12:35–40. Thus, the appointment in Matthew 24:45, which is expressed by the aorist, must be future and not completed, just as it is in Luke 12:42.

The “faithful and discreet slave” refers to any Christian who is faithful and keeping on the watch when Jesus comes as the judge in the great tribulation. It does not refer to a class or group that gives spiritual food during Christ’s presence.

Because Greek aorist is not a tense but only an aspect, the perfective one, it merely focuses on the action to appoint without any details visible as to manner and time, and the context shows that this action is future. This is exactly the same focus as Greek future. But a similar focus is made

39. The rendering of the NJB of Luke 12:41 is: “Peter said, “Lord, do you mean this parable for us, or for everyone? The Greek preposition *pros* with the accusative, can, according to Mounce, be rendered as “to; towards.” But it can also be rendered, “concerning; in respect to.” Because Jesus is speaking to his disciples and not to everyone, I view Peter’s question as: “Does the illustration refer to us, or to everyone?”

by different linguistic factors: In the case of the aorist, the aspect of the verb and the context indicate future reference, while in the other case, the future verb form alone and not the context indicates future reference.

THE "FAITHFUL SLAVE" AND THE GREAT PROPHECY OF JESUS

Table 2.4 compares the words of Jesus in his great prophecy about his presence (*parousia*) and his coming (*erkehomai*) in the great tribulation. At the end of Luke 21, I have added the text of Luke 12:35–46. The texts with the same fonts are parallel. The text is taken from the NIV.

Table 2.4 A comparison of the words of Luke, Mathew, and Mark

Luke 25, 26	Matthew 29	Mark 24, 25
<p>²⁵ “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. ²⁶ Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.</p>	<p>²⁹ “Immediately after the distress of those days“ “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’</p>	<p>²⁴ “But in those days, following that distress,“ “the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; ²⁵ the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’</p>
27, 28	30, 31	26, 27
<p>²⁷ <i>At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.</i> ²⁸ <i>When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”</i></p>	<p>³⁰ <i>“At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.</i> ³¹ <i>And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four</i></p>	<p>²⁶ <i>“At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory.</i> ²⁷ <i>And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.</i></p>

	<i>winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.</i>	
29–32	32–36	28-31
<p>²⁹ He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. ³⁰When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. ³¹Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near. ³²“I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³³Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.</p>	<p>³² “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ³³ Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door. ³⁴ I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.</p>	<p>²⁸ “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. ²⁹ Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. ³⁰ I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. ³¹ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.</p>
34–36 and 12:35-46	36–51	32–35
<p>³⁴ “<i>Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down</i> with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. ³⁵ For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. ³⁶ <i>Be always on the watch,</i> and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that</p>	<p>³⁶ “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷ As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark;</p>	<p>³² “No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³³ <i>Be on guard! Be alert!</i> You do not know when that time will come. ³⁴ It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned</p>

you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

12:35–46

³⁵ “Be dressed ready for service and **keep your lamps burning**, ³⁶ like men waiting for their master to return from a wedding banquet, so that when he comes and knocks they can immediately open the door for him. ³⁷ It will be good for those servants whose master finds them watching when he comes. I tell you the truth, he will dress himself to serve, will have them recline at the table and will come and wait on them. ³⁸ It will be good for those servants whose master finds them ready, even if he comes in the second or third watch of the night. ³⁹ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁰ You also must **be ready**, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.”

⁴¹ Peter asked, “Lord, are you telling this parable to us, or to everyone?”

⁴² The Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful

³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. ⁴² “Therefore **keep watch**, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. ⁴³ But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ So **you also must be ready**, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him. ⁴⁵ “Who then is the faithful and wise servant, whom the master has put in charge of the servants in his household to give them their food at the proper time? ⁴⁶ It will be good for that servant whose master finds him doing so when he returns. ⁴⁷ I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁸ But suppose that servant is wicked and says to himself, ‘My master is staying away a long time,’ ⁴⁹ and he then begins to

task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. ³⁵ “Therefore **keep watch** because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. ³⁶ If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. ³⁷ What I say to you, I say to everyone: **‘Watch!’**”

and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? ⁴³ It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he returns. ⁴⁴ I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁵ But suppose the servant says to himself, 'My master is taking a long time in coming,' and he then begins to beat the menservants and maidservants and to eat and drink and get drunk. ⁴⁶ The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers.

beat his fellow servants and to eat and drink with drunkards. ⁵⁰ The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. ⁵¹ He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The three upper sequences are close parallels. The fourth sequence is longer in Matthew 24 than in Luke 21 and Mark 13. However, Luke 12:35–46 is a close parallel to Matthew 24:36–51, where the faithful slave is mentioned. The main focus of the last verses of each account (Matthew 24:40–51, Mark 13:33–37, and Luke 21:34–36) is that the servants of God must be ready, must be on the watch because they do not know the day and hour when the Lord comes in the great tribulation. The words indicating this focus are in italics and bold script. The words that relate to the faithful slave in the three sequences are written with the **Kino MT** font.

The focus in the fourth section above is: Which servants will be serving God and be on the watch when the Son of man comes? There are two possible scenarios, 1) The individual slave is sleeping (Mark 13:36), or he

is beating his fellow slaves and is drinking with the drunkards (Luke 12:45; Matthew 24:49), and 2) he is keeping on the watch (Mark 13:35; Luke 12:37), and he is doing the work of a slave by giving the other slaves food at the appointed time. (Luke 12:42; Matthew 24:45) The reward is that the master will serve this slave at the table, and the slave will be set above all the master's belongings. (Luke 12:37; Matthew 24:47) I will now take a closer look at the details.

The focus of Matthew 24:39–25:30 is the great tribulation, and so no part relates to the overall presence of Christ. Thus, “the faithful and discreet slave” cannot exist during this presence.

THE IDENTITY OF THE FAITHFUL AND DISCREET SLAVE BASED ON LUKE 12:35–44

I will now look at the details regarding the “faithful steward” mentioned in Luke 12:42, who is identical with the “faithful slave” in Matthew 24:45.

In Luke 12:35–37, Jesus speaks about a master and his slaves. This is not a prophecy, but an illustration (*parabolē*), as verse 41 shows. The illustration is based on the actual relationship between a master and his slaves in Bible times. The slaves were given different tasks while their master was away, one keeping watch at the door. (Mark 13:34; Luke 12:36) One slave, the “steward” (*oikonomos*), would also be in charge of the master's household and distribute food to the other slaves. (Luke 12:42; Matthew 24:45)

The main point of Jesus' illustration is seen in verse 37 (NWT13), namely, that the slaves had to be on the watch when the master returned:

Happy are those slaves whom the master on coming finds watching! Truly I say to you, he will dress himself for service and have them recline at the table and will come alongside and minister to them.

Those who were on the watch would get the reward that the master would minister to them. On this background, Peter asked the question that we see in verse 41 (NJB):

‘Lord, do you mean this parable for us, or for everyone?’

Jesus did not answer Peter's question. But instead, he posed another question, according to verse 42 (my translation):

Who then (*tis ara*) will be (*estin*, **present**) the faithful steward (*oikonomos*), the wise one, whom the Lord will appoint (*kathistēmi*, **future**) over his household of slaves (*therapeia*) in order to continue to give (*didōmi*, **pres infin**) their food allowance (*sitometrion*) at the appointed time (*kairos*)?

The background of Jesus' question was his illustration of the master and his slaves. As already mentioned, one of the slaves of a master would be the *oikonomos* ("steward"), who was in charge of the master's house. So, with reference to the illustration, Jesus, in effect, asks who *will fill the role* of this steward. We note the words "the faithful steward" (*ho pistos oikonomos*). The definite article "the" (*ho*) points back to Jesus' illustration. Among the slaves, there would be one who was in charge of the master's household. So, who *would fill the role of this slave, the* steward (*oikonomos*)? The adjective "faithful" (*pistos*) also refers back to the illustration. The steward would be faithful when he distributed literal food to the other slaves at the appointed time.

It is very important to realize that Jesus did not utter a prophecy about the faithful steward. But he asked who will fill the role of the faithful steward in his illustration about the master and his slaves.

Anyone could choose to fill this role. And those who behaved like the faithful steward would be on the watch when the master arrived, and they would get the reward.

Matthew 24:45 is a clear parallel to Luke 12:42, so I will discuss this scripture (my translation):

Who then (*tis ara*) will be (*estin*, **present**) the faithful slave (*doulos*), even the wise one, whom the Lord will appoint (*kathistēmi*, **aurist**) over his household of slaves (*oiketēia*) in order to give (*didōmi*, **aurist infin**) their food (*trofē*) at the appointed time (*kairos*).

There is no context in Matthew chapter 24 that can tell about the background for the question, "Who then will be the faithful slave, even the wise one?" But Luke 12:35–41 shows the context, which is Jesus' illustration of the master and his slaves. Thus, the definite article *the* in the expression, "*the* faithful slave, even the wise one" in Matthew 24:45 refers to the steward in Jesus' illustration, and the adjective "faithful" refers to the work of this steward of giving the other slaves food at the appointed time. So again, **Matthew 24:45 is not a prophecy** about the coming of the "the faithful and discreet slave." But Jesus asks ***who will fill the role*** of the faithful steward (slave) in his illustration about the master and his

slaves. Anyone could choose to be like this steward. And those who behaved like the faithful steward would be on the watch when the master arrived, and they would get the reward mentioned in verse 46. These conclusions are corroborated by Jesus' words about the wicked slave.

THE IDENTITY OF THE FAITHFUL AND DISCREET SLAVE BASED ON MATTHEW 24:32-51

We have seen that according to Luke 12:35-44, the words about "the slave" represent an illustration (a parable) and not a prophecy with references to particular concrete persons. This is confirmed by the fact that none of the illustrations in chapter 24 of Matthew refer to particular persons.

The sign that was seen in the first century and again would be seen during the presence of Jesus is described in Matthew 24:4-22. The period after 70 CE and to the beginning of the presence is described in verses 23-28. Verse 29 focuses on the great tribulation, and this focus continues to verse 51. In these verses, the illustrations are found.

24:32. After the description of the coming of Jesus and the great tribulation in verses 29-31, Jesus tells a parable or illustration in verse 32. This illustration stresses my point. The fig tree, the branches, and the leaves do not have particular references, as if they were part of a prophecy. But the illustration as a whole shows that the different parts of the sign mentioned by Jesus would be seen and understood by his followers.

24:37, 39. Verses 33-36 show that the generation when the sign would be seen would be known but not the time of the end of this generation. Then Jesus tells the illustration about the days of Noah. The different parts of this illustration have no particular concrete references. But the point is that when the great tribulation starts, a great number of people will not be ready, waiting for Jesus.

24:40-42.

The men and the women, the field, and the hand mill in these verses do not have particular concrete references. But the point is that some persons will be ready and will be taken along because they are waiting for Jesus, while others will not be taken along.

24:43-44.

The householder and those breaking into the house do not have particular concrete references. But verse 44 shows again that the focus is on being ready because Jesus comes at a time when people do not expect him.

24:48-51. The account of the evil slave begins with the Greek word *ean* (“if”), and this shows that the illustration is hypothetical. The evil slave does not have a particular concrete reference.

24:45-47. The Greek word *tis* (“who”) at the beginning of verse 45 has about the same function as the word *ean* (“if”) in verse 48. *Who* will fill the role of that faithful steward, the wise one, in Jesus’ illustration in Luke 12:42? That is, who will do his Christian work faithfully, and by this be ready when Jesus arrives? This viewpoint is also confirmed by Jesus’ illustration in Luke 12:36-38. Here the Greek word *homos* (“like, similar”) in the plural is used. Who will be “*like* men waiting for their master”? There are no concrete references in these verses. But they stress the point of being ready. The same is true with verses 12:42-44 and the parallel verses in Matthew 24:45-47. No part of these verses has a particular concrete reference—***the verses represent an illustration and not a prophecy.***

THE WORDS ABOUT THE WICKED SLAVE

What do the words about the wicked slave mean? NWT13 translates the first part of Matthew 24:48 this way: “But if ever that evil slave says in his heart.” This is a hypothetical situation, and there is one word that helps us see the background of this situation, namely, the demonstrative pronoun *ekeinos* (“this,” “that”) in Luke 12:45 and Matthew 24:48, 49.

⁴⁵ But if ever *that* (*ekeinos*) slave should say in his heart, ‘My master delays coming, and starts to beat the male and female servants and to eat and drink and get drunk.

⁴⁸ “But if ever *that* (*ekeinos*) evil slave says in his heart, ‘My master is delaying,’

⁴⁹ and he starts to beat his fellow slaves and to eat and drink with the confirmed drunkards.

The demonstrative pronoun *ekeinos* needs an antecedent, and the only candidate for *ekeinos* in Luke 12:45 is the steward, who is implied in Jesus’ illustration about the master and his slaves in Luke 12:35–40. The point here is that a person who will fill the role of the steward in Jesus’ illustration may become wicked, and in that case, he will be punished. But if the one who will fill the role of the steward will be faithful, he will be rewarded. As

mentioned, there is no context in Matthew 24:45–46. But Jesus’ illustration in Luke 12:35–40 must be the background for the wicked slave, as well.

Regarding the wicked slave, *The Watchtower* of July 15, 2013, page 25, says:

Jesus warned about an evil slave who concludes in his heart that the master is delaying and who starts to beat his fellow slaves. When the master arrives, said Jesus, he will punish that evil slave “with the greatest severity.”—*Read Matthew 24:48–51.*

Was Jesus foretelling that there would be an evil slave class in the last days? No. Granted, some individuals have manifested a spirit similar to that of the evil slave described by Jesus. We would call them apostates, whether they were of the anointed or of the “great crowd.” (Rev. 7:9) But such ones do not make up the evil slave class. Jesus did not say that he would appoint an evil slave. His words here are actually a warning directed to the faithful and discreet slave.

Notice that Jesus introduces the warning with the words, “*if ever.*” One scholar says that in the Greek text, this passage “for all practical purposes is a hypothetical condition.” In effect, Jesus was saying; ‘If the faithful and discreet slave were ever to mistreat his fellow slaves in these ways, this is what the master will do when he arrives.’ (See also Luke 12:45) However, the composite faithful and discreet slave has continued to keep on the watch and to provide nourishing spiritual food.

The observations of *The Watchtower* accord with the grammar. And the conclusion that Jesus did not appoint an evil slave can also be applied to “the faithful and discreet slave” (literally: “the faithful slave, even the wise one”): Jesus did not appoint the “faithful and discreet slave.” In connection with both slaves, there are questions, and this shows that both situations are hypothetical. So, the conclusion is that that there has never been “a faithful and discreet slave” in the sense used by the GB. But when Jesus comes as the judge in the great tribulation, there will be many individual faithful and discreet slaves who are doing their job, and who are on the watch. And similarly, there will be many individual wicked slaves who will be punished.

Jesus does not say that a “faithful and discreet slave” *will come*, just as he does not say that an “evil slave” *will come*. But he asks who will fill the role of the faithful slave when Jesus comes in the great tribulation.

It is essential to realize that the composite sign of Christ’s presence is found in Matthew 24:4–22 (as well as in Luke 21:8–24a, and Mark 13:5–20). No part of this sign is the focus of Matthew 24:29–51, which exclusively discusses the *coming* of Jesus at the end of his presence and not the overall duration of his *presence*. And the important point of Matthew 24:29–51, and its parallel accounts, is being on the watch at his coming. This is seen in table 2.6.

The contexts in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, confirm that Jesus is not prophesying about a class or group called “the faithful and discreet slave” during his presence. But he is asking ‘who will it be,’ that is, which individuals will be faithful at his coming.

Table 2.6 The words of Matthew, Mark, and Luke about being ready (NWT13)

Matthew	
24:42	Be on the watch.
24:44	You too prove yourselves ready.
Mark	
13: 33	Keep looking, be awake.
13:35	Keep on the watch.
13:37	Keep on the watch.
Luke	
12:35	Be dressed and ready.
”	Have your lamps burning.
12:40	You also, be ready.
21:34	But pay attention to yourselves that your hearts never become weighed down.
21:36	Be awake.
”	And in standing before the Son of man.

All the admonitions in table 2.6 are plural and are therefore addressed to many persons, to those waiting for the coming of Jesus. However, Jesus also changed his focus from several persons waiting to one individual. In Luke 12:35–40, the focus of Jesus is on those who are waiting. But in

Matthew 24:40–45 (NWT13), he focuses on each individual who is waiting.

⁴⁰ Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken along and the other abandoned. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the hand mill: one will be taken along and the other abandoned. . . . ⁴⁵ Who really will be the faithful and discreet slave?

So, the focus is on readiness, both for the individual and for all who are waiting for the coming of the master.

But one could object and say: Those who are taken along in the great tribulation will already have served God for some time during Jesus' presence. Therefore, would not also the faithful and discreet slave in a similar way have served God during Jesus' presence? That those who are taken along for some time have served God, is of course, true. But we must note what *the focus* is, namely, what are God's servants doing at the moment when Jesus comes? Are they faithfully doing their jobs as slaves? Or are they derelict in their assignment like the wicked slave?

Determining *the focus* of each account is imperative in correctly understanding it, and we can illustrate this with Revelation 7:14 and the great crowd. Today, there are millions of persons who are serving God and who look forward to surviving the great tribulation. But if we look at these servants of God from a collective point of view, would it be accurate to call these sincere worshippers of God the “great crowd”? The answer is No. This is because only those servants of God who will have survived that future great tribulation, so as to “come out of” it, and who look forward to everlasting life on earth are the “great crowd.” So, the focus is not on the large group of God's servants who live during Jesus' presence, before the great tribulation, nor on what they do before the tribulation. But the focus is on the situation *after the great tribulation*, on those who have survived that tribulation. And in a similar way, the focus in Matt 24:45-51 is not on what the slaves do *before* Jesus comes, but the focus is on what they are doing at the moment Jesus comes in the great tribulation — at the end of his presence.

The most important reason for rejecting the existence of “the faithful and discreet slave” from 1919 is that the focus of Matthew 24:45–47 is not on the sign of Christ's presence; the verses refer to the great tribulation.

“FOOD AT THE APPOINTED TIME”

The expression “appointed time” is translated from the word *kairos*. The basic meaning of this word is “an appointed time.” NWT84 and NWT13 translate the word with “appointed time” in Matthew 8:29 and 26:18, as well as in Luke 21:24.

Because the setting is a slave who arranges meals for the other slaves at specific times, the rendering “give food at the appointed time” is the best rendering. The expression “appointed time” also accords with the “food allowance” mentioned in Luke 12:42. The slaves would get a certain amount of food at the meals that occurred at the same time every day.

If we try to make the claim that the “food” refers to spiritual food, we encounter a problem. The rendering “appointed time” implies that the master of the slave had decided that the slave should give spiritual food to the domestics at specific times that he had decided. If “food” is applied to “spiritual food,” the expression “food at the appointed time” would, in reality, mean inspiration. This is so, because if God had decided appointed times when his servants on earth would get spiritual food, this spiritual food had to come from God, and that would be inspiration. Even if the weaker rendering “give food at the *proper time*” is used, that would still mean some kind of inspiration. However, *The Watchtower* of February 2017, page 26, says:

¹² *The Governing Body is neither inspired nor infallible. Therefore, it can err in doctrinal matters or in organizational direction.* In fact, the *Watch Tower Publications Index* includes the heading “Beliefs Clarified,” which lists adjustments in our Scriptural understanding since 1870. *Of course, Jesus did not tell us that his faithful slave would produce perfect spiritual food.* So how can we answer Jesus’ question: “Who really is the faithful and discreet slave?” (Matt. 24:45) What evidence is there that the Governing Body is filling that role? Let us consider the same three factors that directed the governing body in the first century. (My italics.)

What the quotation says, represents, of course, the real situation. The conclusions that are drawn in the literature of the Watchtower Society sometimes turn out to be wrong. But the quotation above also dilutes the whole issue of food at the proper time! If the slave is not supposed to produce perfect spiritual food, the food would sometimes be imperfect, or even wrong, and so not in any sense, at the proper time.

Thus, the words that we cannot expect perfect spiritual food contradicts the expression “at the proper time/appointed time.” This is so because

these words would show that the Lord had a particular purpose with the spiritual food connected with particular times. And the Lord's purpose cannot be that the slave would give imperfect spiritual food at the appointed times he had decided. So, when we remove the chaff, what remains is that the imperfect Christians, who constitute the GB, in all sincerity do their best with the literature that is published under their direction. And sometimes they err. This means that the very expression "food at the proper/appointed time" with reference to spiritual food has no explicit meaning at all.

The conclusion is that there is no "faithful and discreet slave" *group* or *class* and never has been. Indeed, none of God's servants/slaves are declared "faithful and discreet" until Jesus judges them to be so at the future great tribulation. And the view by most Witnesses that any new understanding, and anything that our literature says, is directed by Jehovah, and always is what we need at that particular time, namely, "spiritual food at the proper time," is simply wrong! Chapters 4, 5, and 6 show that in many cases, the members of the GB have erred so much that they have caused severe problems for individual Witnesses, even ruined their lives.⁴⁰

According to Luke 12:35–40 and Matthew 24:45–47, "the faithful and discreet slave" refers to individual Christians who are on the watch when Jesus comes as the judge in the great tribulation. It does not refer to a few who have been appointed to interpret the Bible in behalf of other Christians during Christ's presence.

40. In the category "The governing Body" on my website www.mybelovedreligion.com, there are several articles dealing with the Governing Body.

THE GOVERNING BODY

—REVIEW—

The term “governing body” is not found in the Bible, and the very term, itself, is questionable because no Christians *should be governing* other Christians. The king Jesus Christ is the one who is governing the congregations.

In the first part of the chapter, I show that there is no evidence in the book of Acts that there was an ongoing, sitting governing body in the first century CE. The apostles of Jesus were instructed by him, and they instructed the elders. The apostles took the lead in the Christian service, and other Christians accepted this. Therefore, there was no need for another group comprised of the apostles and the elders, who should represent yet another body, let alone an official “governing body,” above and beyond the twelve apostles already established by Jesus to take the lead. Because the apostles were already appointed by Jesus, they did not need a redundant extra appointment to a more authoritative “governing body”. After the year 49, the apostles are not mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles.

The holy spirit was the helper of the Christian congregations and not a governing body. Because the Bible was not yet complete, many Christians received spiritual gifts, including miraculous knowledge. In addition to this kind of *inspiration*, the holy spirit also used what we could call *direction*. In situations involving *direction*, the spirit did not inspire Christians, but it maneuvered situations in a particular direction, so that spiritual-minded Christians could draw the right conclusions. The interplay of inspiration and direction is clearly seen in the account of Peter and Cornelius in Acts, chapter 10.

There was a meeting of the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem in 49 CE. The idea that people of the nations should be circumcised was rejected. But four commandments that were binding for all Christians were decided. This does not show that there was an ongoing, regulatory governing body who made decisions in behalf of all the congregations of the first century, because the text shows that the decisions were made by the inspiration of the “holy spirit”. (Acts 15:28)

If there had been a governing body in the first century, this body would, of all things, have overseen the preaching activity. However, the apostles and the elders are not mentioned in Acts after the meeting in 49 CE, and Acts shows that it was the holy spirit that was overseeing the preaching. Therefore, the holy spirit was the *helper* of the Christian congregations and not a governing body. Each congregation had a body of elders. These elders were charged with being examples, but they should not govern (“be lording it over”) the congregations. (1 Peter 5:3)

From 1879 to 1938 CE, the congregations were democratic. The theocratic arrangement was instituted in 1938, and the organization became fully theocratic in 1945. A governing body was for the first time created in 1971.

In 1972, the elder arrangement was instituted. This led to a great change in the areas of responsibility and power. The circuit overseers lost their power and were viewed as traveling pioneers. And the congregations and their bodies of elders were to a degree independent of the Watchtower Society. In 1976, the bodies of elders started to lose their independence and power, until we today have an organization where the members of the Governing Body have given themselves dictatorial powers.

The Watchtower of 1960, page 265, wrote: “From the time the Watch Tower Society was formed in 1884 it has never solicited money.” Letters from the branch offices and the JW Broadcasting have, in the 21st century, done exactly the opposite. So the previous procedure that builds on the Bible has been abandoned. Today, it is required that each congregation send a sum of money to the branch office each month. This requirement seems to be quite similar to the tithing of other religions. In Norway, the circuit has to pay \$13,000 to the branch office as the rent for the circuit assembly. Kingdom Halls have been expropriated by the branch offices. Many are sold, and the branch offices have taken the money. All this shows that there is a big focus on money, something that was unthinkable for JW in the 20th century.

The phrase “governing body” is not found in the Bible. JW use this phrase in reference to a group of men who function as a government for JW. They have the final say in all important decisions and most of the minor decisions inside the organization of JW as well. The view is that there was a governing body in the first century that led the Christian congregations, and that this is a pattern for the present-day Governing Body. This chapter shows that this view is wrong.

THERE WAS NO GOVERNING BODY IN THE 1ST CENTURY CE

I will later give a detailed description of how the GB was viewed and functioned in the 20th and 21st centuries. But here I describe some main

points as a basis for a comparison with the congregations in the 1st century CE.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE GOVERNING BODY IN THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES

The first time the words “governing body” were used in the literature, was in *The Watchtower* of 1943, page 216. An article of October 15, 1944, page 315, said that because of the final work in the last days, “there must likewise [as in the 1st century CE] be a governing body.” But there was no description or definition in that article clarifying what the brothers meant by the term “governing body”. *The Watchtower* of November 1, 1944, page 331, said that “those who were entrusted with the publication of revealed Bible truths” were the GB.

The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania had a board of directors and a president. But for all practical purposes, these did not function as a body, let alone a “governing” one. From 1879 to 1916, C. T. Russell made all the important decisions, and the directors were only his assistants. From 1919 to 1942, J. F. Rutherford made all important decisions, and the directors were his assistants, and from 1942 to 1971, N. H. Knorr made all the important decisions. So, as far as the functions are concerned, there was no group of equals who made collective decisions. But that changed in 1971 when such a group was formed for the first time, the year before the introduction of the elder arrangement.

The congregations of the Bible Students, from 1879 to 1930, and the congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses, from 1931, were independent of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, and each congregation chose its elders. That changed in 1938 when the Watchtower Society began to appoint the servants (elders) in the congregations. The *theocratic* organization that was formed between 1938 and 1945 also existed in 1971 when the GB was first formed, because, in 1971 each congregation was still relatively independent of the Watchtower Society. Gradually the powers of the elders in the congregations were restricted until today we have a governing body with all power over the doctrines, the assets, and the money of the congregations. Their position is so strong that their decisions and their words cannot be questioned. Those who publicly or privately criticize the GB will be disfellowshipped.

Below I will compare the different stages described above with the Christian congregations in the 1st century CE.

The claim that there was a governing body in the 1st century CE is based on what we read about the apostles and the elders in Acts chapter 15. But I will demonstrate that this claim is not true.

From 1879 to 1971: decisions were made by C. T. Russell, J. F. Rutherford, and N. H. Knorr. There was no governing body.

From 1971 to 2019: The members of the Governing Body have given more and more power to themselves.

2019: The Governing Body has all power over the doctrines, the assets, and the money. Its decisions and its writings cannot be questioned.

WHAT THE BOOK OF ACTS SAYS REGARDING THE APOSTLES AND THE ELDERS

The word “apostles” occurs 26 times in the Acts of the Apostles, as we see in table 3.1 below. The word “elders” with reference to the Christian congregations is mentioned six times. What was the function of the apostles and the elders?

Before Jesus went back to heaven, he gave instructions to his apostles. (Acts 1:2) And when Jesus no longer was on the earth, the apostles were those who took the lead among the Christian congregations. The apostles functioned as a group, which is seen by the fact that they chose Matthias as the twelfth apostle in place of Judas (1:26). That it was the apostles who took the lead is seen by the following expressions: “the teaching of the apostles” (2:42; 4:33), “at the apostles’ feet” (4:35, 36; 5:2); “presented these men to the apostles, (6:6); “the apostles in Jerusalem . . . sent Peter and John” (8:14); “brought him to the apostles” (9:27),

The apostles already had a special status, and so they did not need an extra appointment to a dubious “governing body”. The reason for the status of the apostles was that they had the distinction of having been taught by Jesus himself, and so they were the most experienced Christians at that time. The term “governing body” is in itself questionable. Christians should not be *governing* other Christians. Colossians 1:13 (NWT13) says:

He rescued us from the authority of the darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son.

The Kingdom of God would be established a short time before Satan is bound and thrown into the abyss. But the Kingdom of Jesus already existed in the first century. He was the king, and no other persons were governing his followers. In his letters to the Corinthians, Paul has many words of correction. In 1 Corinthians 4:8 (NW13) he says:

Are you already satisfied? Are you already rich? Have you begun ruling as kings without us? I really wish that you had begun ruling as kings so that we also might rule with you as kings.

The anointed Christians in Corinth would, in the future, be ruling as kings, only after receiving their heavenly reward. So, the time for their ruling or governing had not yet arrived.

Below I will discuss the meeting of the apostles and the elders in 49 CE in detail. But we should already note that it was the holy spirit that was behind the decisions that were made. Therefore, it is not possible to use Acts chapter 15 as a so-called pattern of evidence to justify the existence of an official regulatory body of uninspired men who have been appointed to govern the Christian congregations.

But why were both the apostles and the elders present at this meeting if they did not comprise a governing body at that time? Would it not have been sufficient for the apostles alone to discuss the issue? When the meeting was held, it was 16 years since the death of Jesus. During this time, other persons than the apostles had become mature Christians. One of them was James, who evidently had become a spokesman for the elders, as Acts 21:18 shows. Jesus instructed the apostles, and the apostles would, in turn, naturally instruct the elders. One way to educate elders would be to let them participate in Christian discussions.

As we see from table 3.1, the apostles are not mentioned after Acts 16:4, and the elders are mentioned only three times (11:30; 20:17; 21:18). Much preaching and many Christian events occurred after the year 49. If there was a group of elders that was ***governing*** all the congregations, this group would have been those who were taking the lead at this time. And, therefore, one would expect such a governing body to be conspicuous in other Bible accounts, giving ongoing direction to the congregations. But

no such group is mentioned in Acts or in the other books of the Christian Greek Scriptures.

Table 3.1 Passages including the words “apostles” and “elders”⁴¹

1:2	Until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to <i>the apostles</i> he had chosen.
1:26	Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to <i>the eleven apostles</i> .
2:37	Peter and <i>the other apostles</i> .
2:42	They devoted themselves to <i>the apostles’</i> teaching and to the fellowship.
4:33	With great power <i>the apostles</i> continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.
4:35	And put it at <i>the apostles’</i> feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.
4:36	Joseph . . . sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at <i>the apostles’</i> feet.
5:2	But [he] brought the rest and put it <i>at the apostles’ feet</i> .
5:12	<i>The apostles</i> performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people.
5:18	They arrested <i>the apostles</i> and put them in the public jail.
5:29	Peter and <i>the other apostles</i> replied: “We must obey God rather than men!”
5:40	They called <i>the apostles</i> in and had them flogged.
6:6	They presented these men to <i>the apostles</i> , who prayed and laid their hands on them.
8:1	On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except <i>the apostles</i> were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.
8:14	When <i>the apostles</i> in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them.
8:18	When Simon saw that the Spirit was given at the laying on of <i>the apostles’</i> hands, he offered them money.
9:27	But Barnabas took him [Saul] and brought him to <i>the apostles</i> .

41. The quotations are from NIV; italics and bold script were added by me.

11:1	<i>The apostles</i> and the brothers throughout Judea heard that the Gentiles also had received the word of God.
14:4	The people of the city were divided; some sided with the Jews, others with <i>the apostles</i> .
14:14	But when <i>the apostles Barnabas and Paul</i> heard of this, they tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting:
15:2	So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see <i>the apostles</i> and elders about this question.
15:4	When they came to Jerusalem, they were welcomed by the church and <i>the apostles</i> and elders , to whom they reported everything God had done through them.
15:6	<i>The apostles</i> and elders met to consider this question.
15:22	Then <i>the apostles</i> and elders , with the whole church, decided to choose some of their own men and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas.
15:23	<i>The apostles</i> and elders , your brothers, To the Gentile believers in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings.
16:4	As they traveled from town to town, they delivered the decisions reached by <i>the apostles</i> and elders in Jerusalem for the people to obey.

The Acts of the Apostles describes a part of the history of the Christian congregations from 33 CE to the middle of the 60s. What do we find when we compare Acts with the history of the Bible students and JW in modern times?

We see that there were spokespersons for the groups of Christians. Peter gave an important talk on Pentecost in the year 33, and we read about “Peter and the other apostles” (Acts 5:29), which indicates that Peter was a spokesperson. At the meeting in 49 CE, James was speaking, and we read about “James and all the elders” (21:18), which indicates that James was a spokesperson for the elders. Paul and Barnabas also gave talks on different occasions.

From 1879 to 1916, C. T. Russell was a spokesperson. From 1919 to 1942, J. F. Rutherford was a spokesperson, and the same was true with N. H. Knorr from 1942 to 1977. These persons represented Jehovah in an excellent way, and their function can be compared with the “spokesperson” function of Peter, James, and Paul. But there was no “apostolic succession.”

In 1971, the Governing Body of JW was formed. At the start of the elder arrangement, there were bodies of elders in each congregation, and so it was concluded that there also should be a body of elders that should lead the whole organization. Two things were wrong with this, in my view, 1) it was claimed that the pattern of the GB was found in Acts chapter 15, which, as I've argued above, has no basis, and 2) the name, "the **Governing** Body" was used. I will illustrate: A Letter from the Norwegian branch office of September 3, 2008 said that the designation "presiding overseer" could seem to imply that this brother had greater authority than the other elders. Therefore, the designation would be changed to "coordinator of the body of elders" from January 1, 2009. Similarly, the word "governing," in the designation "Governing Body," is connected with a government, a group that is above, and subjects that are below. A much better designation of the body that was formed in 1971 would have been "the Coordinating Group," in keeping with that body's own reasoning in the above mentioned 2008 letter.

In spite of the misleading name, the members of the GB in 1971 accepted the understanding of the elder arrangement, and the local bodies of elders were allowed to exercise the power and independence commensurate with their first-century counterparts. Gradually, however, the members of the GB gave themselves more and more power at the expense of the bodies of elders, until today they have all power. And they really became "the **Governing** Body" in the full sense of the word.

Parallel with this situation was that more and more human commandments were made. (Matthew 15:9) When I started as a circuit servant in 1965, I received the book, *Questions in Connection with the Service of the Kingdom* (1961). The book has 84 pages, and in addition to issues related to marriage, divorce, and polygamy, only seven different issues that might lead to disfellowshipping are listed. In 1977, there was a course for elders, and a book with 96 pages entitled "*Pay Attention to Yourselves and to All the Flock*" along with printed highlights from the course was published. In this book, I count 18 disfellowshipping offenses. In 2019, the book for elders "*Shepherd the Flock of God*" was released, and I count 46 disfellowshipping offenses.

Chapters 5 and 6 discuss the true regime of disfellowshipping, and the discussions show that there are actually only 11 disfellowshipping offenses that have **a clear Scriptural basis**.

The conclusion is that the expression “the Governing Body” and its function as a government for JW are human inventions that have no basis in the Bible.

THE HOLY SPIRIT VERSUS A “GOVERNING BODY”

Jesus Christ was Jehovah’s representative in Israel from 29–33 CE. He knew that after his death, his followers would need direction, and it was the holy spirit that would direct his followers. Jesus said:

But the helper (*parakletos*), the holy spirit, which the Father will send in my name, that one will teach you all things and bring back to your minds all the things I told you. (John 14:26, NWT13)

There is one crucial difference between the congregations in the first century and the present congregations. In the first century, the Bible was not yet complete, and therefore the holy spirit was active in a way very different from today. Individual Christians received spiritual gifts, including miraculous knowledge. (1 Corinthians 12:1–11) The book of Acts reports that prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. (Acts 11:27) It also says that in the congregation in Antioch, there were prophets and teachers. (Acts 13:1) Judas and Silas, who were prophets, encouraged the brothers. (Acts 15:32) Philip from Caesarea had four daughters who prophesied. (Acts 21:9) At one time, the prophet Agabus came down from Judea to Paul. (Acts 21:10) All these prophets spoke words that were directly inspired by God.

As I have shown above, the apostles, whom Jesus had chosen, took the lead among those who believed in Jehovah and his Son, Jesus Christ. Acts 2:42 states that the believers “were devoting themselves to the teaching of the apostles.” Acts 4:34, 35 tells about monetary contributions that were deposited “at the feet of the apostles.” At one time, seven men were chosen to oversee the daily distribution of food to those who were in need. These men were placed before the apostles, who appointed them for their work. (Acts 6:6) When people in Samaria accepted the word of God, the apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to help them. (Acts 8:14)

When there were dissension and disputing regarding an important teaching, Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to put the issue before the apostles and the elders. (Acts 15:2) When the issue was solved, a letter from the apostles and the elders was sent to the congregations. (Acts 15:23) Paul and Silas traveled to different congregations, and they asked

the members of the congregations to observe “the decrees that had been decided upon by the apostles and the older men, who were in Jerusalem.” (Acts 16:4) Based on the texts quoted above, it is clear that first, the apostles, and later the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem took the lead among the followers of Jesus. When the apostles were dead, the elders took the lead.

INSPIRATION AND DIRECTION BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

What was the role of the helper (*paraklētos*)? We have already seen that there were prophets among the Christians, who presented messages from God. The holy spirit was also working in different ways. There was a sincere Ethiopian eunuch who had traveled to Jerusalem to worship God. Jehovah’s angel told Philip to approach this person and preach to him. (Acts 8:26–29)⁴² We see that the spirit inspired Christians to deliver messages from God, it gave individuals a miraculous knowledge, and it even directed the preaching work. For instance, when Paul was first given the milestone assignment to preach to the nations, Jesus did not first inform any “governing body,” who then informed Paul. No, but Paul says that he did not consult with “blood and flesh” — i.e., any humans, neither did he have to get the permission of the ‘apostles in Jerusalem,’ but was sent by God directly to his preaching assignment. This underscores that God was directing the congregations and the preaching work by means of the holy spirit, and not by a supposed “governing body” of that time. (Galatians 1:16, 17) But what was the role of the spirit in connection with the teaching of the apostles?

In the book of Acts, we see how the spirit both used *inspiration* and *direction*. The word “inspiration” means that the spirit directly gave information to a servant of God, and “direction” means that the spirit maneuvered a situation in a particular direction, where a spiritual-minded servant of God had to draw the right conclusion. Very good examples of inspiration and direction are seen in Acts chapter 10. Until this time, only Jews and Samaritans had become a part of the Christian congregation. But now, people of the nations should also become a part. Peter was the one God selected to introduce this new procedure. Let us now study Acts chapter 10 and learn how the spirit both inspired miraculous insights, as

42. In verse 29 the angel is called “the spirit.”

well as maneuvered situations in order to nudge his people in the right direction.

An angel spoke to the army officer in a vision and told him to send some men to Joppa to Simon Peter (vv. 1–6). This was an example of divine *inspiration* — direct information from God. The next day Peter fell into a trance, and three times he saw a vessel with “unclean” animals. And he was asked to eat the meat. But he refused because this was against the law of Moses (vv. 9–16). This vision was also by divine *inspiration*.

While Peter was contemplating the meaning of the vision, three men of the nations approached him. This was a strange situation for Peter because no person of the nations had yet become a part of the Christian community. There was no cooperation between the Jews and the nations, so naturally, Peter would have refused to have anything to do with these men. However, the spirit, which could refer to an angel, told Peter to go with the men (vv. 19, 20). This again was a case of *inspiration*, and inspiration was necessary in this case because Peter would never have had anything to do with people of the nations (v. 28). Only because he was directly told to go with these men did he do so. Then he came to the house of Cornelius, and because of the vision of the vessel with the “unclean” animals, Peter drew the only conclusion a spiritual-minded Christian could draw: Apparently God wanted him to enter the house of these people of the nations (vv. 23–28). This was *direction* because the spirit had maneuvered the situation in a way to help Peter draw the right conclusion.

But now a potentially awkward situation arose. Cornelius told Peter about the angel and his vision, and then he said: “And now all of us are in front of God who is present, to hear all the things you have been instructed by Jehovah to say” (v. 33). But Peter had not received any such instructions. However, because of the whole situation, the visions both he and Cornelius had seen, and the angels who had spoken to both of them, he drew the only conclusion a spiritual-minded servant of God could draw: ‘Jehovah has *directed* me to preach the good news about the Kingdom to these people of the nations,’ and so he did (vv. 34–43). This was *direction* because the spirit had maneuvered the situation in a way that would help Peter draw the right conclusion. We must remember that what Peter did—entering the house of persons of the nations and preaching to them—was unprecedented because it had never been done before. Then, while Peter was speaking, the holy spirit fell upon those hearing Peter’s speech, and

they were speaking in tongues (vv. 44–46). This was *inspiration*. And how did Peter react? He drew the only conclusion a spiritual-minded servant of God could draw: Because these people had received the holy spirit, they should be baptized (vv. 47, 48). This was *direction*, and the baptism of people of the nations was also unprecedented.

We see in this account that the spirit, by four examples of *inspiration*, maneuvered the situation, so Peter three times *was directed* to draw particular conclusions. By this, people of the nations for the first time became members of the people of God.

The holy spirit was governing the congregations through the help of inspiration and direction. No humans were governing the other Christians.

THE MEETING IN JERUSALEM IN 49 CE

The issue presented in Acts chapter 15 was related to circumcision. Should Christians of the nations be circumcised? In the discussion, we see that God’s direction was sought because two areas were explored: 1) What had God written that might throw light on the circumcision issue, and 2) What had God done with the Christians of the nations?

Peter related the history of Cornelius and his house, and that they were baptized with holy spirit without any requirement of circumcision (vv. 7–11). Then Paul and Barnabas told about the signs and portents God had done through them among the nations of uncircumcised persons (v. 12). After this, James discussed the prophecy of Amos 9:11, showing that there would be a people of the nations called by Jehovah’s name. Both the Scriptures and the actions of God’s spirit showed that persons of the nations became Christians without any requirement of circumcision. So, the decision of the apostles and the elders under the direction of holy spirit was that circumcision was not necessary.

But what about the four things that were required of both Jews and people of the nations? They should abstain from things sacrificed to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. It was James who mentioned these four commandments, and it could seem that these four things were unrelated. But this is not the case, as I already have shown. Psalm 36:10 says: “For with you is the source (well) of life.” Because God has created life, he is its owner. In God’s eyes, life is holy,

which means that it cannot be used for anything except for what God has decided. And interestingly, all the four commandments in Acts 15:29 are based on the principle of the holiness of life. Blood is the soul and represents life, and it cannot be used for any purpose except on the altar. To eat blood or strangled animals, which are not bled, is a violation of the holiness of life. God desires that children shall have the best possible environment where they can grow up, and this is marriage. Sexual intercourse outside marriage can give life to children in an inferior environment. Therefore, such sexual relations violate the sanctity of life. Animals could be slaughtered for food but for no other purpose. To slaughter an animal as a sacrifice to idols violates the sanctity of its life.

What was the basis for these four commandments? Was it inspiration, or was it direction? Because the holy spirit is said to be behind the four commandments, they must have been formed by inspiration. In Romans 13:8–10, Paul shows that if we love our neighbor, we would not need to have all of the ten commandments spelled out for us, because this love would automatically move us not to do what the commandments forbid. But this argument of love cannot be used in connection with the four commandments in Acts 15:29. This shows that these four were exceptional and important, and, as mentioned, it is natural that the holy spirit played an important role in connection with these commandments. This accords with 15:28, which shows that the authors of the four commandments were “the holy spirit and we.”

There is nothing in Acts chapter 15 that even hints at the existence of a governing body. The fact that the apostles and the elders are mentioned together cannot be used as an argument. In 15:4, the Jerusalem congregation, the apostles, and the elders are also mentioned together. And verse 22 (NWT13) says that “the apostles and the elders, together with the whole congregation, decided to send chosen men from among them to Antioch.” If the decisions by the apostles and the elders are used as an argument in favor of a governing body, then the argument can be made on the basis of verses 4 and 22 that since “the whole congregation” participated in that decision, it must have been a part of the governing body as well.

The meeting in Jerusalem probably was held in the year 49 CE, and seven years later, in 56 CE, Paul came to Jerusalem. The account in 21:17–19 says:

¹⁷When we got to Jerusalem, the brothers welcomed us gladly. ¹⁸But on the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the elders were present. ¹⁹And he greeted them and began giving a detailed account of the things God did among the nations through his ministry.

If there was a governing body in Jerusalem, it is obvious that Paul would have met with the members of this body. But the account says that he met with “James and all the elders.” The Online Study edition of NWT13 tries to explain away this problem by claiming that the apostles “were driven out of Judaea.” But there is no evidence for this claim. And if there was persecution, why was not all the elders “driven out” as well?

The discussion above shows that it was the holy spirit, the helper, that was directing the Christian congregations and not a governing group of men, “the Governing Body.”

The holy spirit was the source of the four commandments given at the meeting in 49 CE. No governing body can be identified.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AND NOT A “GOVERNING BODY” WAS DIRECTING THE PREACHING

The Acts of the Apostles presents a part of the history of the Christian congregations until the middle of the 60s CE. In all of its accounts, there is no trace of a persistent “governing body.” But we see that it was the holy spirit that directed the preaching work. Table 3.2 has a list of passages from NIV showing the direction of the holy spirit in the preaching work.

Table 3:2 The holy spirit directed the preaching work

9:31	Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace. It was strengthened; and encouraged by <i>the Holy Spirit</i> , it grew in numbers, living in the fear of the Lord.
13:2, 4	While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, <i>the Holy Spirit</i> said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” . . . The two of them sent on their way by <i>the Holy Spirit</i> , went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus.
16:6	Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by <i>the Holy Spirit</i> from preaching the word in the province of Asia. ⁷ When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but <i>the Spirit of Jesus</i> would not allow them to. ⁸ So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. ⁹ During the night

	Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” ¹⁰ After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that <i>God</i> had called us to preach the gospel to them.
20:22, 23	“And now, compelled by <i>the Spirit</i> , I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. ²³ I only know that in every city <i>the Holy Spirit</i> warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.
20:28	Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which <i>the Holy Spirit</i> has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.
21:4	Finding the disciples there, we stayed with them seven days. Through <i>the Spirit</i> they urged Paul not to go on to Jerusalem.
21:11	Coming over to us, he took Paul’s belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, “ <i>The Holy Spirit</i> says, ‘In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.’” (My italics.)

Normally, negative evidence has little weight. But if there were an ongoing, sitting governing body, one of its most important actions would be to direct the preaching work. When a governing body is not mentioned anywhere in Acts, but several places show that the holy spirit directed the preaching, this is good evidence against the existence of a governing body.

The holy spirit and not a governing body directed the preaching work.

THE CONGREGATIONS AND THE ELDERS IN THE 1ST CENTURY CE

When there was no governing body in the 1st century CE, what was the structure of the congregations? Each congregation had a group of elders. (1 Timothy 5:17; James 5:14) These elders were appointed by other elders on the basis of particular characteristics. (Titus 1:5; 1 Timothy 3:1–7) This shows that the congregations, in some respects, were theocratic and not democratic. The area with Christian congregations was vast, therefore, to what degree it was possible for traveling overseers to appoint elders in all the congregations is an open question. In any case, the apostles and elders in Jerusalem did not have anything to do with the appointment of elders in different cities.

What was the relationship between the elders? The words of Jesus in Matthew 23:8–11 (NIV) struck the right tone:

⁸ But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. ⁹ And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. ¹⁰ Nor are you to be called ‘teacher,’ for you have one Teacher, the Christ. ¹¹ The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹² For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

These words show that all Christians, including the apostles, should take a humble position and serve one another. No Christians should govern other Christians.

However, when Christian congregations were established, the elders had to take the lead. How should the relationship between the elders and the members of the congregation be? In his admonition to his fellow elders, Peter said, according to 1 Peter 5:2, 3 (NWT84):

² Shepherd the flock of God in YOUR care, not under compulsion, but willingly, neither for love of dishonest gain, but eagerly, ³ neither as lording it over those who are God’s inheritance, but becoming examples to the flock.

The elders should not be “lording it over those who are God’s inheritance.” The Greek word is *katakryienō*, and according to BAGD, the meaning is “become master, gain dominion over, subdue, be master, lord it (over), rule over.” So elders should not be rulers over or be governing the congregation.

The epistle to the Hebrews has some admonitions to the members of the congregations. Hebrew 13:7, 17 (NWT84) says:

⁷ Remember those who are taking the lead among you, who have spoken the word of God to you, and as you contemplate how [their] conduct turns out imitate [their] faith.

¹⁷ Be obedient to those who are taking the lead among YOU and be submissive, for they are keeping watch over your souls as those who will render an account; that they may do this with joy and not with sighing, for this would be damaging to YOU.

The words “those taking the lead” are present middle participle of the verb *hēgeomai*, and the meaning of this verb, according to the mentioned

lexicon, is: “lead, guide, think, consider, regard.”⁴³ The words in 13:7, 17 show that the persons mentioned were members of the congregations of the Hebrews. Therefore, the words must refer to the elders of these congregations.⁴⁴

The elders would take the lead on many occasions, including the teaching of the congregation members. We note that they were speaking “the word of God” to the congregation members. They were admonished to be submissive when the elders took the lead. But the elders should not “be lording it” over the congregation members. This will, of course, include that they should not be *governing* their congregations, nor should they make human commandments that the congregation members had to follow. Instead, they should be *examples* that the flock could imitate.

So the conclusion is that the idea that some Christians should be governing other Christians is not only absent from the Christian Greek Scriptures, but it is contrary to these scriptures.

“THE GOVERNING BODY” IN THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES

An article in *The Watchtower* of February 15, 1994 was entitled: “Are Jehovah’s Witnesses a Cult?” Regarding the position of the leaders, we read on page 7:

It is precisely because of this close adherence to Bible teachings that the veneration and idolization of human leaders so characteristic of cults today is not to be found among Jehovah’s Witnesses. They reject the concept of a clergy-laity distinction. *The Encyclopedia of Religion* aptly states about Jehovah’s Witnesses: “A clergy class and distinctive titles are prohibited.”

They follow Jesus Christ as their Leader and as Head of the Christian congregation. It was Jesus who said: “Do not you be called Rabbi, for one is your teacher, whereas all you are brothers. Moreover, do not call anyone your

43. I show on page 222 under the heading “The Application of Lexical Semantics” that the lexical meaning of a word is a concept in the mind of native speakers. The entries in lexicons are just glosses, that is, the most common renderings in English of a word from the source language. However, one or two of the glosses may be close to the core meaning of a concept. When I use the word “meaning” with reference to a lexicon, I refer to these glosses.

44. *Kingdom Ministry*, 11, 1983, 3.

father on earth, for one is your Father, the heavenly One. Neither be called 'leaders,' for your Leader is one, the Christ."—Matthew 23:8–12.

It is clear that the members of the GB neither in 1994 nor today are being idolized. But what about veneration? This word is defined as, “A feeling of profound respect or reverence”;⁴⁵ “the feeling or act of venerating (= very much respecting) someone or something.”⁴⁶ As long as N. H. Knorr (1905–1977) and F. W. Franz (1893–1992) lived, there was no focus on those who took the lead. Letters to the congregations were signed by The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. And when we spoke about the contents of these letters or other information given, we used the expression “the Society.” The Governing Body was rarely mentioned. I do not recall how long this situation lasted, but I think it lasted as long as F. W. Franz lived (he died in 1992) and throughout the whole 20th century. And therefore, the words of the article are true.

The situation today is very different. The main characteristic of a cult or a sect is that one person or a group of persons are at the top with dictatorial power. This is the situation with the eight members of the Governing Body. There is a great focus on the GB and its members. Letters to the congregations, even when they deal with minor matters, have the words, “The Governing Body has decided . . .”; “The Governing Body has allowed . . .” And “the faithful and discreet slave” or just “the slave” is mentioned very often in the recent literature.⁴⁷ For example, in *Pure Worship of Jehovah—Restored At Last* (2019), “the faithful and discreet slave”/“the faithful slave” is mentioned 21 times.⁴⁸ In *Isaiah’s Prophecy Light for All Mankind* (2000), volumes I and II, “the faithful slave” is mentioned four times.⁴⁹ In *Paradise Restored to Mankind—By Theocracy* (1972), which contains a discussion of Zechariah’s prophecy, and in *The Nations Shall Know that I am Jehovah—How?* (1971), which contains a discussion of Ezekiel’s prophecy, “the faithful slave” is not mentioned at all. In *The Watchtower* between 2000 and 2019, I counted 284 occurrences of “the

45. <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/veneration>.

46. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/veneration>.

47. No member of the GB knows the original languages of the Bible. Nevertheless, the translators of NWT13 needed the approval of the GB for the translation of “Sheol” and “Hades” as “the Grave,” and for using many different words instead of “soul.” *The Watchtower* of December 15, 2015, pages 11 and 12.

48. Pages 89⁽²⁾, 91⁽²⁾, 102, 103, 107⁽²⁾, 118⁽²⁾, 119, 124, 128⁽⁴⁾, 156, 158, 208, 222, 225.

49. Volume I, on pages 223, 311; volume II, on pages 229, 318.

faithful and discreet slave,” and in the *Kingdom Ministry* between 2000 and 2011, I counted 38 occurrences.

The words of Calvin Rouse, the counsel of The Watchtower Society that I quoted in the introduction, illustrate the situation: “We are a hierarchical religion structured just like the Catholic Church.”

These words do not relate only to the appointment of elders, which was the issue in the court case where Rouse said the words, but they relate to all other sides of the organization. Today the members of the GB have all power among JW. They make almost all decisions, including making rules of issues that are not mentioned in the Bible, and they have given themselves the power over the assets and the money of the congregations. So, there can be no doubt the GB and their representatives function like a clergy class. And the expressions “the Governing Body” and “the faithful and discreet slave,” or “the faithful slave,” or just “the slave” are used so often, and with such authority, that they can be compared with the titles of the Pope or the Catholic clergy.

Members of JW generally view the GB as more authoritative than Catholics view the Pope, and the GB has more power over the Witnesses than the Pope has over Catholics. So today, we must say that there clearly is **a veneration** of the GB and its members. In other words, the organization of JW today is clearly autocratic and dictatorial, and that contradicts both the words of the article from February 15, 1994, that is referred to above, and the Bible. Moreover, as I will show below, articles in *The Watchtower* after World War II strongly condemned an organizational structure like the present organization.

DIFFERENT VIEWS OF TEACHING THE BIBLE IN THE 20TH AND 21ST CENTURIES

The view of the organization and its leaders in the middle of the 20th century was the diametrical opposite of the present view that is described above. The article “Let God Prove to Be True” in *The Watchtower* of November 1, 1946, pages 330–332, shows the contrast between the hierarchical Catholic Church and the Christian organization of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Below is a long quotation:

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. . . . (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 *perfect* in faith and devotion to God. . . .

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.

How is this? How is disunity over each one’s individual interpretation of the Holy Scriptures now overcome and 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.

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*.

Therefore, like a pillar, the church of the living God Jehovah must hold forth and display the truth, which truth, Jesus said, is God’s Word. She must be a sign and witness to God’s truth. (Isa. 19:19, 20) She, the church of God, must uphold and lend support to the truth of His Word, and not be the depository of religious traditions of men. *She [the church of the living God, 1Timothy 3:15] is not the teacher of God’s servants and witnesses, but looks to God as the Teacher by Christ Jesus. As it is written for her benefit: “And all thy children shall be taught of Jehovah.” (Isa 54:13, A.S.V.; John 6:45). . . .*

The church’s final days on earth, at this end of the world, fall in that period of human history when Jehovah God stands bound by his own word to prove that he is true. *He gives the proof by fulfilling the Bible and its prophecies and thus providing the official interpretation of it. Then Jehovah’ holy spirit discloses such interpretation in the fulfilled Bible. By accepting such interpretation the true church safeguards herself against private, individual interpretation. . . .*

At the approaching battle of Armageddon between His universal organization and Satan’s world-wide organization, Jehovah by Christ Jesus will further prove that he is true. He will give the official interpretation to his written Word by fulfilling it and thereby make even his enemies to see that “Thy word is truth.”⁵⁰ (My italics)

14. The same conclusions as those quoted above are found in *The Watchtower* of July 1, 1943, page 203, ¶36.

Christendom is divided because of all the different religious denominations that build on their religious traditions and on individual interpretations of the Bible by its members. The issue of the article is whether Christian unity can only be achieved by a human organization with the authority to serve as a teacher for individual Christians, such as the Catholic Church. The answer is No!

Jehovah's Witnesses have achieved Christian unity, but that is not because the organization of JW is "the divinely appointed Custodian and Interpreter of the Bible" or "the teacher of God's servants and witnesses." But the reason is that JW look "to God as the teacher by Jesus Christ." Regarding this, the article says:

He gives the proof by fulfilling the Bible and its prophecies and thus providing the official interpretation of it. Then Jehovah's holy spirit discloses such interpretation in the fulfilled Bible. By accepting such interpretation, the true church safeguards herself against private, individual interpretation.

The view that Jehovah and Christ Jesus were the interpreters has two sides. First, the basic doctrines of the Bible are found throughout the whole book. When an article in *The Watchtower* presented the different scriptures dealing with one doctrine, the readers were invited to 'carefully examine the Scriptures' (Acts 17:11) and draw their own conclusions. Because Jehovah has inspired the Bible with clear doctrines that everyone can study, he is the interpreter of the Bible.

Second, when the prophecies of the Bible are fulfilled, Jehovah is also the interpreter because he has inspired the prophecies. I use the following example: The New World Theocratic Assembly was held in Cleveland in Ohio in the USA in 1942. The book *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, page 93. says:

On the final day of the assembly, Brother Knorr delivered the discourse "Peace—Can It Last?" In it he set out powerful evidence from Revelation 17:8 that World War II, which was then raging, would not lead into Armageddon, as some thought, but that the war would end and a period of peace would set in.

The war ended in 1945, and the wild beast, who is an eighth king (Revelation 17:10, 11), ascended from the abyss. The prophecies that N. H. Knorr discussed were inspired by God. When these prophecies were fulfilled before the eyes of God's servants, it was Jehovah who interpreted his own prophecies.

And interestingly, the understanding of the Bible doctrines and prophecies was based on how God maneuvered the situation, which is very similar to the *direction* that was used in the 1st century CE, which is described on pages 108-110.

The organization is not the teacher of Jehovah's Witnesses

Because God is the teacher and interpreter of the truth, the interpretation of the Bible is not something that is left to each individual Christian. However, in issues that are not mentioned in the Bible, each Christian must be his own interpreter, i.e., each Christian must make his own decisions based on his conscience. For more than 30 years the Watchtower Society encouraged individual decisions, as seen in the following examples.

The Watchtower of 1942, pages 205 and 206 said regarding tobacco:

The use of tobacco is extremely filthy, regardless of the form in which it is used... *To be sure, the Society has no power or authority or desire to say that a person who wishes to use tobacco may not do so. Nor can it say, "You may not witness for the Kingdom."*

The Watchtower of September 15, 1951, page 574, shows that the Watchtower Society would not meddle in issues of secular work and personal activities:

The Watchtower Society is organized for the purpose of preaching the good news of the Kingdom in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all nations, and it encourages and aids all to have a part in that work, freely advising as to the most effective procedures. ***As to other forms of activity or work the Society has no specific recommendation to make.*** To draw up rules for all the possible situations relative to secular work would embark us upon the compilation of a voluminous, Talmudlike set of regulations, seeking to make all the fine distinctions as to when and when not certain work becomes objectionable... *The Society's silence on these matters is not to be viewed as giving consent, nor is it to be viewed as a condemnation we do not wish to openly express.* It means that we think it is the individual's responsibility to choose, not ours. It is his conscience that must be at ease for his course, not ours... *So let each one accept his own responsibility and answer to his own conscience, not criticizing others or being criticized by them, when individual consciences allow different decisions on the same matter.*

The Watchtower of February 1, 1954, page 94, discussed the issue of gambling, and we read:

Gambling appeals to selfishness and weakens moral fiber; it tempts many into habits of cheating and crookedness... Can a Christian be employed in a gambling enterprise that is legally recognized and allowed? He may think that he can do so if he refrains from gambling himself or allowing his spiritual brothers to gamble through his services. One may be able to conscientiously do this, while another would not be able to do so in good conscience. Each one will have to decide individually whether he can or cannot do so conscientiously. It is doubtless preferable to be separate from the atmosphere surrounding such activities, and the Christian may wisely arrange to make a change in his occupation. It is a matter each one must decide for himself and in accord with his circumstances and conscience. The Watch Tower Society does not decide as to an individual's employment, as we previously stated in the September 15, 1951, *Watchtower*, page 574.

The Watchtower of October 1, 1972, page 589, shows that in the year when the elder arrangement was instituted, the Watchtower Society still admonished individual Witnesses to make decisions based on their consciences:

DIFFICULT DECISIONS OF CONSCIENCE

Thus there are many, many acts and practices that are *specifically* approved or condemned in the Bible. Many, many others are clearly in harmony with, or in violation of, *principles* contained therein. Yet, particularly in the modern, complex society that has developed in many parts of the earth, there remain situations and circumstances where personal decision, based on the individual conscience of the one involved, is required. So many things in life are a matter of *degree*. The difference between a gentle pat and a vicious blow is a matter of degree of force. The difference between simple respect—as, for example, respect to a ruler or a national emblem—and reverential worship is also a matter of degree. Where extremes are involved there is no real question. It is when the matter comes within what might be called a 'gray area,' approaching the borderline between what is clearly right and what is clearly wrong, that questions arise. The closer to such 'borderline situation' the matter comes, the greater the part the individual's conscience must play in his decision. Faced with such circumstances, what should we do?

Jehovah God expects us to use our faculties of intelligence, our knowledge, understanding and judgment, and to do conscientiously what our faith points us to do. God does not place us under the conscience of some other human in such matters. We must each make our own decision in harmony with conscience—conscience molded by God's Word. We must also take

the consequences of our own decisions, not expect someone else to make the decision and bear that responsibility for us.

It would therefore be wrong in such matters to try to extract from someone else, from a body of elders or from the governing body of the Christian congregation, some rule or regulation that ‘draws the line’ on matters. Where God’s Word does not itself ‘draw the line,’ no human has the right to add to that Word by doing so. God in his wisdom allows us to show what we are in the “secret person of the heart,” and the decisions we make in such personal cases may reveal this. True, we may err at times without wrong motive, and God, who reads our hearts, can discern this.

All the quotations above show how the Watchtower Society lived up to the words expressed in *The Watchtower* of November 1, 1946, that the organization was not “the teacher of God’s servants and witnesses.” But this view changed gradually, as we will see in the next section.

Already in 1973, the GB overruled the Christian consciences by deciding that those who used tobacco would be disfellowshipped. And in 1974, the GB overruled the Christian consciences by deciding that oral and anal copulation and other lewd practices between married persons would lead to disfellowshipping—but this was retracted in 1978. But it was first in the 21st century that hundreds of new Talmud-like laws were introduced by the GB.

The changing views on the Governing Body, the slave, and the organization

The first time the term “governing body” is mentioned is in *The Watchtower* of 1943, page 216. How can the view of 1946 that the organization is not the interpreter of the Bible and the teacher of God’s servants and witnesses be reconciled with the existence of a governing body? Below are some quotations showing the view of the GB from 1946 on.

According to the theocratic arrangement today *there must be a governing body* for the congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses throughout the earth. The facts show these to be associated with the Watchtower Bible & Tract Society. (My italics) (*The Watchtower* of 1950, page 448)

The theocratic governing body of today includes older, spiritually qualified men of the anointed remnant. . . . [Question on paragraph:16:] With what is the governing body closely associated, and how is its extension throughout the earth carried on? ¹⁶ Being adapted to modern conditions and

requirements and being obliged to render to Ceasar Ceasar's things, *the visible theocratic organization today has a legally established service agency, The Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society*, incorporated in 1884 under the laws of Pennsylvania, United States of America. (My italics.) (*The Watchtower* of 1954, page 532)

During the years since the Lord has come to his temple the visible governing body has been closely identified with the board of directors of this corporation. This, however, does not mean the corporation itself is the visible governing body, for if no corporation existed God's congregation with its organizational structure would still exist. (*Qualified to Be Ministers*, 1955, 354)

As then, so now it has pleased the divine headship to establish a central directive body, *which serves and governs Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the earth.* (My italics.) (*The Watchtower* of 1958, page 434)

The visible governing body of Jehovah's organization has also been given authority by Him to direct the work of His worshippers on earth at this time. (Matt. 24:45–47) The congregation and its overseers show their proper view of authority by accepting willingly its counsel provided through the printed page, letters or its traveling representatives. (My italics.) (*The Watchtower* of 1972, page 272)

However, inasmuch as the Society was the publishing agent used to provide Jehovah's Witnesses with literature that contained spiritual enlightenment, *the Governing Body was logically and of necessity closely associated with the officers and directors of that legal Society.* (My italics.) (*Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, 1993, page 228)

When we look at the quotations above, we see that the identity of the members of the GB is vague. They are said to be anointed men, and the GB is associated with the Watchtower Society and uses this Society in the governing work and as a service agency. The *Proclaimers* book does not identify the GB in clear terms. But it uses the words “logically and of necessity.” The natural conclusion to draw from all the vague descriptions is that before 1971 there was no group of anointed men who had meetings and made decisions as a governing body.

As a matter of fact, just as C.T. Russel and J.F. Rutherford were the leaders of the organization, N.H. Knorr was the leader of the organization from 1942, and the vice president F.W. Franz was the leader of the doctrinal part of the organization. This is confirmed by the fact that it was Knorr who arranged for and oversaw the translation of the New World Translation and not the board of directors, and it is also confirmed by the

witness given by Franz in a court case in Scotland in 1954. This is discussed in detail on pages 81 and 82.

How did the GB “govern” Jehovah’s witnesses until 1971? I am not aware of any “governing,” except for the activity of the Watchtower Society. Elders and ministerial servants were appointed by the Watchtower Society, and the programs for assemblies and meetings were made by the Society. Books and magazines were also published by the Society. The booklet *Organization Instructions for Kingdom Publishers* (1945) and the book *Your Word is a Lamp to My Foot* (1967) dealt with the organization. These arrangements were based on the Bible, and they regulated the life in the congregations—human commandments were not made, or were few. The Witnesses in the congregations did not feel that they were “governed” in any way. The few letters that came to the congregations were signed by The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. In these letters, the organization referred to itself as “the Society,” and when we referred to the organization, we also used the term “the Society.”

However, the letter to the congregation committees of December 1, 1971 describing the new elder arrangement is signed by *Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses*. (See figure 3.1 below) This signature, which I saw for the first time, struck me by surprise, and I am quite certain that the GB had not been mentioned in letters from the Watchtower Society from 1963, when I became an elder and read the letters from the Society, until this letter in 1971. Moreover, after this, the letters continued to be signed by “The Watchtower Society” until 2002.⁵¹ I made a search in the Watchtower literature, and I found that the expression “the Governing Body” was used 27 times per year between 2000 and 2019 compared with five times per year between 1944 and 1970. Because of this strong focus on the GB in the 21st century, the position of the GB is also strong in the minds of most Witnesses today.

The faithful and discreet slave was discussed in the last chapter, and the view the organization had regarding the identity of “the slave” was clear: All the anointed men and women who took the lead in the preaching of

51. For example, the letter of October 13, 1986 says, “The Society is glad to announce that . . .” During the years, I have given talks at different assemblies, and the letters about this until May 3, 2002 said, “The Society has given you the assignment of . . .” After this, the letters said, “We have given you the assignment of . . .” and the letters were signed by, “Your brothers Jehovah’s Witnesses The Watchtower.”

the good news of the Kingdom constituted the collective “slave.” However, most of these had nothing to do with organizing the worldwide community of JW, or with making the literature and the programs for meetings and assemblies. So, we have the same situation in connection with “the slave” as we do with the GB: the leading anointed men of the Watchtower Society represented all the anointed men and women who constituted “the faithful and discreet slave.”

Therefore, the important issue is this: How could JW before 1971 believe that there was a faithful and discreet slave who gave spiritual food at the appointed time while holding the claim that its governing body was not “*the divinely appointed Custodian and Interpreter of the Bible*” and “*the teacher of God’s servants and witnesses*”? *The Watchtower* of 1947, page 199, says:

However, the “faithful and wise servant” class is rewarded now even on this earth while they are in the flesh. They are appointed to be the visible servant with whom Jehovah God deals by Christ Jesus and through whom, therefore, God does his Kingdom-witness work in the earth. *They are made his visible channel, and under Christ Jesus their Head they are given the “meat in due season”, all the Kingdom truths revealed from time to time*, in order that they may minister this to all of God’s household of sons and to all the consecrated persons of good-will in all nations of this world. (Ps. 75:6, 7; Luke 12:42–44) (My italics)

These words accord with the view of the organization from 1946 that is discussed above. The “faithful and wise servant” (= the slave) functions as God’s channel by spreading the Kingdom message and by ministering Kingdom truths to God’s household and to persons of good-will. But we note that the members of “the slave” *are given* these Kingdom truths, the “meat in due season.” And as already discussed, this works in two ways, 1) God has inspired the Bible with its basic doctrines, and 2) He fulfills his prophecies, and by this, interprets them, and this information is presented in the literature of the Watchtower Society. This is the same as the *direction* God used in the first century CE: God maneuvered a situation in a certain direction. And his spiritual-minded servants would draw a certain conclusion, as in Peter’s dealings with Cornelius (see pages 108-110). And this explains how that *Watchtower* of 1946 could say that the organization is not “*the interpreter of the Bible and the teacher of God’s servants and witnesses*.” But the organization *is directed* by God to understand his Word, and therefore, it is the tool Jehovah used for the preaching of the good news of the Kingdom.

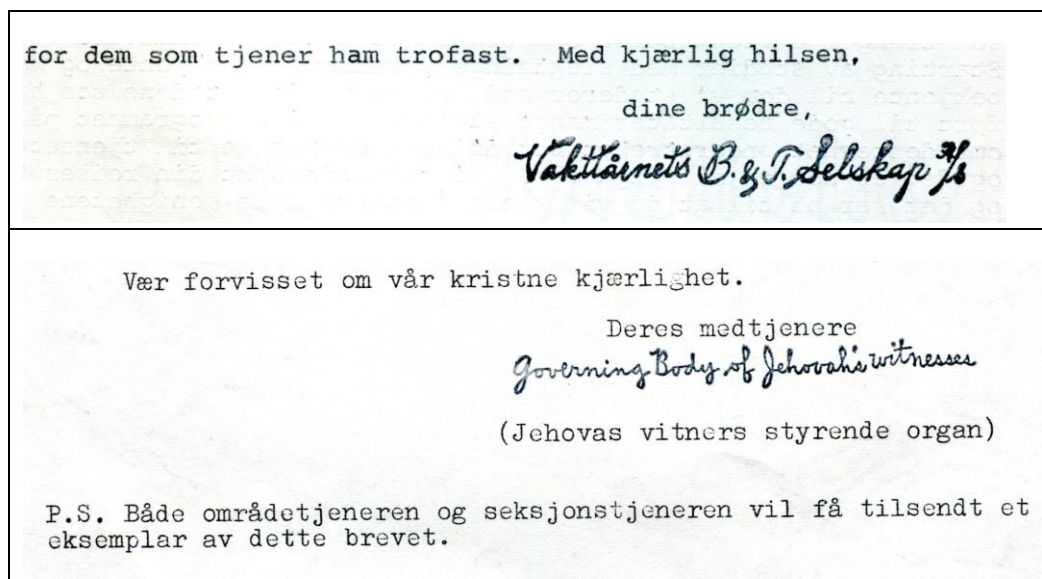


Figure 3:1 The signature in the letter of October 25, 1971 (above) and of December 1, 1971 (below)

How long did JW have the doctrine that God’s servants on the earth cannot and should not interpret the Bible? *The Watchtower* of 1952, page 80, ¶10 says:

Jehovah God deals with his people as a servant class. *He does not feed each one individually nor does he appoint an individual over them. No individual student of God’s Word reveals God’s will or interprets His Word.* (2 Pet.1:20, 21) God interprets and teaches, through Christ the Chief Servant, who in turn uses the discreet slave as the visible channel, the visible theocratic organization. (My italics)

The “discreet slave” was viewed as all the anointed Witnesses on earth. They were a class, and it was stressed that *God had not appointed any individual over his servants and Witnesses*—God was the teacher. The *Awake!* of 22 July 1955 p. 25 says:

If we always keep in mind that the truth is God’s, and not man’s, *and that no man can interpret prophecy*, but that the true follower of the Lord Jesus can see it after it is fulfilled. . . .(My italics)

That no man, but only God, was the interpreter of his prophetic Word was also what I learned when I started to study the Bible in 1961. And this view was also a part of my preaching for many years. We must remember that after World War II, N. H. Knorr and F. W. Franz were the leading brothers, and the style of the articles from 1946 and 1952 suggests that Franz was the writer of many of these. The two leading brothers clearly

did not change their minds regarding the role of God as the Bible's interpreter.

However, as the members of the GB transferred more and more power to themselves, the position of the GB as an interpreter of God's word and as a government for JW also became more and more the prevailing paradigm. And this paradigm shift in thinking became particularly clear for those who were traveling representatives of the Watchtower Society. The letter "To all circuit and district overseers" from Watchtower Bible and Tract Society INC, dated September 1, 1980, expressed the position of the slave class as a teacher and interpreter of the Scriptures:

Keep in mind that to be disfellowshipped, an apostate does not have to be a promoter of apostate views... Therefore, if a baptized Christian abandons the teachings of Jehovah, as presented by the faithful and discreet slave, and persists in believing other doctrine despite Scriptural reproof, then he is apostatizing. Extended, kindly efforts should be put forth to readjust his thinking. However, if, after such extended efforts have been put forth to readjust his thinking, he continues to believe the apostate ideas and rejects what has been provided through the 'slave class', then appropriate judicial action should be taken [= disfellowshipping].

This letter shows that a Witness who publicly criticized the GB would be disfellowshipped. *But even a person who had a different view* of one interpretation of the GB but who was not arguing about it to others might be disfellowshipped as well.

In contrast with the words of *The Watchtower* of 1952, that God "*does not appoint an individual over them* [his people]," *The Watchtower* of February 15, 2009, page 26, says:

Moreover, Jesus Christ has appointed the faithful and discreet slave "over all his belongings"—all Kingdom interests on earth. (Matt.24:47) Included among these belongings are the facilities at the world headquarters of Jehovah's Witnesses, at branch offices in various lands, and at Assembly Halls and Kingdom Halls worldwide. Included too is the work of Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making.

The only names of the leaders of JW that some Witnesses knew in the 1960s were N. H. Knorr, as the president of the Watchtower Society, and the vice-president F. W. Franz. Their names were known because they gave talks at international assemblies. But as persons, they kept themselves in the background. Moreover, the quotation from *The Watchtower* of 1952 said that no individual was appointed over the Witnesses. And the names

of the thousands who belonged to the “slave class” were not known. But the focus was on Jehovah God and Christ Jesus.

However, in the last part of the 20th century, in contrast with the previous view that God was the only interpreter of the Holy Scriptures, the members of the GB gave themselves more and more power. And for all practical purposes, from the start of the 21st century, the GB has functioned as “*an interpreter of the Bible and as a teacher for God’s servants and Witnesses.*”

The first explicit step away from the view of 1946, that God and not men was the only interpreter of the Bible, is seen in the book, *Draw Close to Jehovah* (2002), page 312:

Jehovah also speaks to us by means of “the faithful and discreet slave.” As Jesus foretold, *a small group of anointed Christian men has been appointed to provide spiritual “food at the proper time”* during these troublesome days. (Matthew 24:45–47) When we read literature prepared to help us acquire accurate knowledge of the Bible and when we attend Christian meetings and assemblies, we are being fed spiritually by that slave. Because it is Christ’s slave, we wisely apply Jesus’ words: “Pay attention to how you listen.” (Luke 8:18) We listen attentively because we recognize the faithful slave as one of Jehovah’s means of communicating with us. (My Italics)

The view from the days of the Bible students in the 19th century that “the faithful and discreet slave” referred to all the anointed Christians, including men and women, was now changed. The words “a small group of anointed Christian *men*” represent a new view of the identity of “the slave.”

The second explicit step away from the view of 1946 is expressed in *The Watchtower* of July 15, 2013, page 22. This article identifies members of the GB as “the faithful and discreet slave”:

Who, then, is the faithful and discreet slave? In keeping with Jesus’ pattern of feeding many through the hands of a few, that slave is made up of *a small group of anointed brothers who are directly involved in preparing and dispensing spiritual food during Christ’s presence.* (Italics in original.) Throughout the last days, the anointed brothers who make up the faithful slave have served together at headquarters. *In recent decades, that slave has been closely identified with the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses.* (My italics.) Note, however, that the word “slave” in Jesus’ illustration is singular, indicating that this is a *composite* slave. (Italics in original.) The decisions of the Governing Body are thus made collectively.

In 1919, . . . Jesus selected capable anointed brothers . . . to be his faithful and discreet slave . . . (My italics.)

The position of teachers, which in *The Watchtower* of 1946 was reserved for Jehovah God and Jesus Christ, was now to be occupied by eight men, whose names were known, and who believed that they were appointed by God to serve as teachers and governors of JW. This is seen in the reason they gave for their appointment as the faithful and discreet slave.

(The) slave is made up of *a small group of anointed brothers who are directly involved in preparing and dispensing spiritual food during Christ's presence.* (Italics in original.)

The eight members of the GB had now, contrary to the words of *The Watchtowers* of 1946 and 1952, taken **a position over** God's servants and Witnesses to function as their teachers. They have kept themselves in the foreground, and their names are known by most Witnesses.

The third explicit step away from the view of 1946 was presented in *The Watchtower* of March 15, 2015, pages 7–11. The criterion presented for determining a prophetic type indicated that most of the accounts in the Hebrew Scriptures that were previously viewed as prophetic types were not prophetic at all.⁵² The reason given in 1946 for why and how God is the interpreter of prophetic texts was that God inspired the prophecies in the Bible, and when he also fulfilled the prophecies, he, in effect, gave his official interpretation of these prophecies. If most of the prophetic types were not prophetic at all, God could not fulfill these prophecies, and thereby interpret them, and thus, show that he was the true God.

The fourth explicit step away from the view of 1946 was the introduction of a new understanding of the Bible that undermines the view of the inspiration of the Bible that was held for 120 years. In addition, a new allegorical interpretation method was introduced. This is also expressed in *The Watchtower* of March 15, 2015, page 11:

Should we conclude that Bible narratives have only a practical application and no other meaning? No. Today our publications are more likely to teach that one thing **reminds us of** or serves to illustrate another. They are less likely to present many Bible accounts in a rigid framework of prophetic types and antitypes. (My italics.)

The new view of the Bible was, according to the article, that a great number of accounts in the Hebrew Scriptures are not prophetic and they do not have any direct meaning for us today. On top of this view, an extra-biblical element was introduced: Different accounts in the Hebrew Scriptures were said to **remind** the members of the GB of something. And these **reminders** would be presented in *The Watchtower* and other literature as “food at the proper time.” These **reminders** were produced in the minds of the members of the GB.

This means that not only did the GB abandon the view that God is the only interpreter of his Word, but they also discarded the view that humans cannot analyze God’s Word and understand it. A new element **in addition** to the text of the Bible was introduced, namely, **the minds of the members of the GB**. What the text of the Bible **reminded** these GB members of was God’s communication to his Witnesses. These reminders have been printed in *The Watchtower* and other literature, and this is what the Witnesses should study and feed on. By this, the teaching authority has been moved from the text of the Bible to mere humans, to the members of the GB. A clear example of this is the book *Pure Worship of Jehovah—Restored at Last* (2019). This book is said to be “an updated explanation of Ezekiel’s prophecies” (page 2). But a large portion of the book is not an analysis of the text of Ezekiel at all but a presentation of what this text **reminds** the members of the GB of. Chapter 7 has a detailed discussion of this book.

1947 The faithful and discreet slave is identical with the men and women comprising the remnant of the anointed Christians.

2002 The faithful and discreet slave is identical with a small group of anointed men.

2013 The faithful and discreet slave is identical with the eight anointed men of the Governing Body.

1946, 1952, 1955 The organization of JW is not the divinely appointed interpreter of the Bible and teacher of God’s servants—God is the interpreter and teacher.

2002 The faithful and discreet slave has been appointed to prepare spiritual food and to be Jehovah’s means of communicating with his people.

2013 The eight men of the GB are directly involved in preparing and dispensing the spiritual food.

2015 The thoughts in the minds of the eight men—what the accounts in the Bible remind them of—are presented as spiritual food.

1952 God does not appoint any individual over his people.

2009 A small group of anointed men is appointed over God's people and all Kingdom interests on earth.

THE ORGANIZATION IN THE YEARS 1919 TO 1971

From 1879 until 1938, the congregations of the Bible Students, who took the name Jehovah's Witnesses in 1931, were democratic. The elders were, for example, voted in by the congregation members. This created some problems because the members of the congregations did not make their choice of elders based on the requirements outlined by Paul. In 1938 the situation changed, and from then on the servants (elders) in the congregations were appointed by the Watchtower Society. However, the organizational arrangement was still not in full accordance with the Bible, because there was one man who was responsible for the Watchtower Society—J. F. Rutherford until 1941, and N. H. Knorr from 1941 to 1971—and there was one man—the congregation servant—who was responsible for each congregation.

The first time the words “governing body” are used in the literature is in *The Watchtower* of 1943, page 216. In 1944, *The Watchtower* again mentioned the governing body on page 315. The article discusses Acts chapter 15 and argues that the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem functioned as a “governing body.” Then the article says:

To be organized for the final work in these latter days there must likewise be a governing body under Christ.

The Watchtower of November 1, 1944 discusses the theocratic organization. The article refers to the magazine *Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence*, starting in 1879. Regarding this magazine, the article says:

But genuine seekers for Christianity found in its pages the hunger-satisfying spiritual food that made the Bible more and more understandable; and they looked to the Lord God and his Chief Servant Christ Jesus to supply them further “*meat in due season*” through its pages and columns. And Jehovah God has done so, down to this issue. Reasonably, those who were entrusted with the publication of the revealed Bible truths were looked to as the Lord's chosen *governing body* to guide all those who desired to worship God in spirit

and in truth and to serve him unitedly in spreading these revealed truths to other hungering and thirsting ones. However, the Theocratic principle of rule and organization was not clearly discerned back there, and a more or less democratic organization and operation of companies of consecrated Christians was permitted and practiced.⁵³ (My italics.)

The Watchtower of December 15, 1971 expresses the same view as the quotation above: The GB was associated with *Zion's Watch Tower*. However, we note that there was no defined group with a finite number of members that was said to be the GB.

How did *this governing body* make its appearance in recent times? Evidently under the direction of Jehovah God and his Son Jesus Christ. According to the facts available, *the governing body* became associated with the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. C. T. Russell was patently of *that governing body* back there in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Being fully dedicated to God through Christ, he set himself to apply his time, energy, abilities, wealth and influence to defending God's inspired Word and spreading its message. *To that end he began publishing Zion's Watch Tower back there in July of 1879, believing, as he said in its columns, that this had Jehovah's backing, and hence there would be no solicitation for money.* He manifested the qualifications of an overseer as set out in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:5–9 and accordingly he was requested by the congregation of Christian Bible students at Allegheny to serve as its pastor or spiritual shepherd. Five years later Zion's Watch Tower Tract Society was incorporated and served as an "agency" to minister spiritual food to thousands of sincere persons seeking to know God and to understand his Word and to come into relationship with him through Christ. (My italics.)

Dedicated, baptized, anointed Christians became associated with that Society at headquarters in Pennsylvania. Whether on the Board of Directors or not, they rendered themselves available for special work of the "*faithful and discreet slave*" class. They aided in the feeding and directing of the slave class, and thus *a governing body* made its appearance. This was evidently under the guidance of Jehovah's invisible active force or holy spirit. Also, under the direction of the Head of the Christian congregation, Jesus Christ the Son of God. *True, the members of that governing body were not directly appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ. For that matter, not all the members of the governing body associated with the Jerusalem congregation in the first century were thus directly appointed. How, then, were those*

53. *The Watchtower* of 1944, page 331.

“elders” of the Jerusalem congregation who were not numbered among the twelve apostles made members of the governing body? Evidently by appointment of the original twelve apostles, acting under the guidance of Jehovah’s holy spirit. (My italics.)

This is illustrated by the action of those twelve apostles when appointing Stephen and Philip and five other men to take care of certain business of the Jerusalem congregation. (Acts 6:1–8) Also, the apostle Paul pointed out in his remarks to the elders of the Ephesus congregation that the overseers of God’s flock of spiritual sheep were appointed by God’s holy spirit. (Acts 20:28) Thus, too, even though there were no apostles of Christ on hand in the nineteenth century, God’s holy spirit must have been operative toward the formation of *the governing body* for his anointed remnant of the *“faithful and discreet slave” class*. The facts speak for themselves. There came on the scene a body of anointed Christians who accepted and undertook *the responsibilities of governing* the affairs of Jehovah’s dedicated, baptized, anointed people who were following in the footsteps of Jesus Christ and endeavoring to fulfill the work stated in Jesus’ prophecy at Matthew 24:45–47. Facts speak louder than words. *The governing body* is there. Thankfully Jehovah’s Christian witnesses know and assert that this is no one-man religious organization, but that it has *a governing body* of spirit-anointed Christians.⁵⁴ (My italics.)

According to the understanding in the days of Rutherford and Knorr, “the faithful and discreet servant (slave)” was identical with all the anointed Christians on earth, and the GB consisted of unnamed persons who were closely associated with The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society from 1879. *The Watchtower* of July 15, 2013 contradicts the view expressed in 1944 and 1971 that “the faithful and discreet slave” existed from 1879 on:

Were the Bible Students in the years that led up to 1914 *the appointed channel* through which Christ would feed the sheep? No. they were still in the growing season, and the arrangement for a channel to provide spiritual food was still taking shape. The time had not yet come for the weed-like imitation Christians to be separated from the true Christian wheat. . . . (My italics.)

From 1914 to the early part of 1919, Jesus accompanied his Father to the spiritual temple to do a much-needed cleansing work. (Mal. 3:1–4) Then, starting in 1919, it was time to begin gathering the wheat. Was it

54. *The Watchtower* of December 15, 1971, pages 760, 761.

finally the time for Christ to appoint *one organized channel* to dispense spiritual food? Yes, indeed! (My italics.)

In his prophecy about the time of the end, Jesus foretold that he would appoint a channel to give out spiritual “*food at the proper time.*” (Matthew 24:45–47) Which channel would he use? True to the pattern he set in the first century, Jesus would once again feed many through the hands of a few.⁵⁵ (My italics.)

In comparison with the group of the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem, there were two important problems. First, around 60 years after the magazine was first published, the organization still was democratic and not theocratic. This was changed in 1938 when a theocratic order was introduced. Second, there was still a democratic element after the theocratic order was implemented in 1938: The number of votes at the annual meetings of the Watchtower Society were based on how much money each member contributed. At the annual meeting on October 2, 1944, this was changed. And thus, the organization was from October 1, 1945, when the new arrangement was implemented, fully theocratic:

From the provisions of the Society’s charter [Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1896], it would seem that the being a part of *the governing body* was dependent upon the contributions to the legal Society. But according to the will of God this could not be so among his true chosen people.⁵⁶ (My italics.)

Now it is fully appreciated that the Theocratic principle must apply to all instruments that the anointed remnant, or “*faithful and wise servant*” class uses. *That includes the legal instrumentality, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, which is so closely connected with the visible governing body of Jehovah’s Theocratic people.* Money, as represented in financial contributions, should have no determining voice, should in fact have nothing to do with the filling of *the governing body* of Jehovah’s witnesses on earth. It confuses the matter, and raises up uncertainties and difficulties for the application of the Theocratic rule as respects *the governing body*. The holy spirit, the active force which comes down from Jehovah God through Christ Jesus, is that which should determine and guide in the matter. Whereas this fact was not perceived clearly when the Watchtower Society’s charter was framed according to the law of the land in 1884,

55. Ibid., July 15, 2013, page 19.

56. Ibid., 1944, page 332.

it is now conscientiously appreciated by all the faithful remnant and their companions. (My italics.)

Hence, at a legally called business meeting of all shareholder-voters of the Society on October 2, 1944, it was unanimously voted that the Society's charter be revised and be brought into full harmony with Theocratic rule and truth. . . .

Hence, on October 1, 1945, seven years after Jehovah's brilliant flashes of Theocratic truth and their practical application, a revised charter of the WATCH TOWER BIBLE AND TRACT SOCIETY should go into effect, wisely and obediently amended according to his Theocratic rule.⁵⁷

There was no GB before 1971, and there was no group giving spiritual food from 1919 on. But the spiritual food was given by J. F. Rutherford. Thus, no faithful and discreet slave could have been appointed in 1919.

There were now two different viewpoints regarding the faithful and discreet slave and the GB. *The Watchtower* of November 1, 1944 and December 15, 1971 say that the faithful and discreet slave and the GB existed from the time when the first *Watchtower* was published in 1879, and *The Watchtower* of July 15, 2013 says that God appointed the faithful and discreet slave in 1919.

THE FIRST GOVERNING BODY WAS CREATED IN 1971

In the last part of the 1960s, studies were performed to create a Bible lexicon, and in 1969, *Aid to Bible Understanding* was published. The organization of the first-century Christian congregations was carefully studied, and that resulted in a new understanding of this organization. The book *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom* says:

When research was being done under the supervision of *the Governing Body* in preparation of the reference work *Aid to Bible Understanding*, attention was once more directed to the way in which the first-century Christian congregation was organized. A careful study was made of such Biblical terms as “older man,” “overseer”, and “minister.” Could the modern-day organization of Jehovah's Witnesses conform more fully to the pattern that had been preserved in the Scriptures as a guide?

57. *The Watchtower* of 1944, page 333.

Jehovah's servants were determined to continue to yield to divine direction. At a series of conventions held in 1971, attention was directed to the governing arrangements of the early Christian congregation. It was pointed out that the expression *pre·sby'te·ros* (older man, elder), as used in the Bible, was not limited to elderly persons, nor did it apply to all in the congregations who were spiritually mature. It was especially used in an official sense with reference to overseers of the congregations. . . .

Arrangements were promptly put into operation to bring the organization into closer conformity to this Biblical pattern. These began with the Governing Body itself. Its membership was enlarged beyond the seven who, as members of the board of directors of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania, had been serving as a governing body for Jehovah's Witnesses. No fixed number for the Governing Body was set. . . . (My italics.)

It was determined on September 6, 1971, that the chairmanship at meetings of *the Governing Body* should rotate annually according to the alphabetical arrangement of the family names of its members. This eventually went into effect on October 1. . . . (My italics.)

During the following year, preparation was made for adjustments in the oversight of the congregations. No longer would there be just one congregation servant assisted by a specified number of other servants. Men who were Scripturally qualified would be appointed to serve as elders. Others, who met the Bible's requirements, would be appointed to be ministerial servants.⁵⁸

The new view of “older men” and “overseers” that developed in connection with the study of the Aid-book was presented to N. H. Knorr and F. W. Franz. They studied the material carefully and accepted the conclusions. Their reaction showed real humility because the consequence of the new understanding was that they had to give up their positions as the leaders of the organization. Now there were to be a group of equals who made all important decisions and not the president and the vice president of the Watchtower Society. The quoted book uses the expression “the Governing Body,” and shows that this body previously consisted of the seven directors of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. But these seven were not “a governing body” in the sense of these words as they were used in 1971. N. H. Knorr was the president. He personally corresponded with the branch offices and appointed circuit

58. The book *Jehovah's Witnesses—Proclaimers of God's Kingdom*, pages 233, 234.

and district overseers and Bethel members.⁵⁹ F. W Franz was the principal writer of books and articles, but Knorr was a writer as well. As far as I know, the other directors contributed very little written material. They were responsible for different areas in the organization, the accounting department, printing, the making of the ink for the printing, etc. What I now have described shows that there was no GB of equal brothers who made their decisions as a group before October 1, 1971.

Moreover, *The Watchtower* article discussing the difference between the Watchtower Society, the faithful and discreet slave, and the GB, shows that the seven directors could not constitute a governing body because they were voted in as directors for a period of three years, and the members of the GB should not be voted in but should be appointed by holy spirit. Also, during the 26 years from 1919 to 1945, those who voted for the directors were members of the Watchtower Society, not because of spiritual qualifications but because of monetary gifts. Such persons could not, of course, rightly appoint the members of a theocratic governing body.⁶⁰

The new arrangement did not only create bodies of elders to now lead the congregations instead of one congregation servant. But the areas of responsibility in the organization changed dramatically. I was a circuit servant in 1971, and all circuit servants got a letter telling us that we no longer had the responsibility that we had before. From now on, we were only traveling pioneers who could give advice to the congregations we visited, only when asked for it. Not only was the power of the circuit servants transferred to the bodies of elders. But letters from the Watchtower Society with directions were few. I estimate that the bodies of elders today receive ten times as many letters during one year as the bodies of elders received in the middle of the 1970s. So clearly, when the elder arrangement was introduced, the full responsibility for each congregation rested with the body of elders.

59. I was a few months at the branch office in 1972 when the theocratic history for Norway was written, and I was assigned the task of going through all the Bethel archives and read all the documents, including the letters, in order to find things that could be mentioned in the history. I read all the letters from Knorr, and I realized that he was a wise person and a good organizer.

60. *The Watchtower* of 1971, pages 755–762.

These bodies of elders had a level of authority that the congregation servant and his assistants did not have before the new arrangement. The elders were encouraged to look for opportunities to give public talks at places other than the Kingdom Hall. They were encouraged to consider which subjects would fit their territories and make their own outlines for public talks in connection with these subjects. They were encouraged to find new ways to preach the good news. And they were also encouraged to use a part of their elder meetings to discuss deep Bible truths. The congregation members, at the recommendation of the body of elders, decided whether to build or rent a Kingdom Hall. This was a local matter, and the branch office had nothing to do with it. The situation was that the bodies of elders had considerable freedom to make their own decisions in several areas that were not directed by the Watchtower Society.

The congregations followed the same meeting program provided by the branch office, and the branch office appointed the elders. But apart from this, the bodies of elders were, to a great extent, independent of the Watchtower Society. One important side of the new arrangement was that even though the elders had different personalities and different knowledge of the Bible, they were equals. That was also the reason why the positions of the elders, such as presiding overseer and theocratic school overseer, rotated each year.

Parts of three days were used for circuit assemblies in the 1960s. Much of the program discussed local needs. The circuit overseer decided what should be discussed at the service meeting. A part of the program consisted of role plays, and for these, there were only short outlines. The circuit overseer used several days to design the role plays. In contrast with present circuit assemblies, where the whole program is predesigned, the program at the three-day circuit assemblies was, to a great extent, made by local brothers.

In the 1960s and to the middle of the 1970s, the circuit servant/overseer gave four talks when he visited a congregation. The branch provided the outline for the public talk, but the subjects of the other talks were decided by the circuit overseer. He also had two meetings with the servants in each congregation, and there were no outlines for these meetings. Today, all the outlines except one talk by the circuit overseer are made under the direction of the GB.

One example of the power of the elders is that it was the bodies of elders who sent recommendations of new elders to the branch office.⁶¹ But in 1976, the responsibility and freedom of the bodies of elders gradually started to change. A letter of August 1, 1976, indicated that the circuit overseers would get more responsibility. It said that from now on, the circuit overseer could be present when the body of elders discussed if a brother was qualified to become an elder. The letter said:

Even though the circuit overseer will not say anything when the elders make their final decision and will not have any part in the final decision in each case, he will give his opinion when he sends the recommendation on the forms that are made for this purpose.

It was also in 1976 that the congregations got a letter saying that only outlines for public talks from the Watchtower Society could be used by public speakers. And all meetings had to be held in the Kingdom Hall. Through the years, the rotations of elder positions were fewer and fewer until there was no rotation at all.

The organizational arrangement in 1972 was close to the arrangement that we find in the Bible. The book *Qualified to Be Ministers* (1955) page 351, said regarding the congregations in the first century CE:

The early congregation was definitely organized in a theocratic way. . . . Although *all were brothers, on the same level*, and there were no clergy and laity classes, and *those who were of the governing body and who performed duties of special responsibility were workers*, yet the congregation was in no way democratically operated, neither was it communistic, and ***certainly not dictatorial***. (My italics.)

My experience was that the brothers at headquarters who took the lead behaved like brothers on the same level as all others and showed that they were workers and not governors, even though they had special responsibilities. In 1973, I had the privilege of working together with M. G. Henschel when he visited Norway as zone overseer. And I found him to be friendly and easy to cooperate with. F. W. Franz visited Norway in 1974. My wife met him, and she felt that he treated her as superior to himself (Philippians 2:3, NWT84). Everyone who met him found him to be a mild-tempered and friendly brother. And while the organization was theocratic and appointed elders and ministerial servants, we did not view

61. *Organization for Kingdom-Preaching and Disciple-Making*, page 61.

the leading brothers at headquarters as a government. The organization was not hierarchical, and there was certainly no trace of dictatorial leadership.

The individual Witnesses also had great freedom to use their conscience in connection with personal decisions. I repeat a small part of the quotation from *The Watchtower* of 1972, page 589, that I already have discussed:

We must each make our own decision in harmony with conscience—conscience molded by God’s Word...

It would therefore be wrong in such matters to try to extract from someone else, from a body of elders or from the governing body of the Christian congregation, some rule or regulation that ‘draws the line’ on matters. Where God’s Word does not itself ‘draw the line,’ no human has the right to add to that Word by doing so.

When the Governing Body was formed in 1971 and the elder arrangement was introduced in 1972, the individual Witness had real Christian freedom. This is excellently expressed with the words, **“Where God’s Word does not itself ‘draw the line,’ no human has the right to add to that Word by doing so.”** Today, this Christian freedom is gone, and the words in blue would be rewritten in the following way: **“Where God’s Word does not itself ‘draw the line,’ the Governing Body has the right to add to that Word by deciding where that line will be drawn.”** This is seen in the hundreds of laws and rules that the GB has written in the books, *“Shepherd the Flock of God”* (2019) and *Aid to Answering Branch Office Correspondence* that will be discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

THE PRESENT GOVERNING BODY

When I speak of the “present Governing Body,” I think of the GB after 2000 CE, six years after G. Lösch, the longest-serving member, was appointed. There are not many Witnesses today who remember the start of the elder arrangement in 1972. And there are still fewer who have closely followed all the organizational changes that have occurred during the 49 years since that time. Because I have had responsible positions during these years, I have witnessed how the organization has gradually become more and more autocratic, until we have the situation today with the GB functioning as the government of JW with unlimited power.

This development evidently was based on a particular theory. But it is quite ironic that now when the different parts of the theory have been fulfilled, the whole theory has been abandoned. The theory is found in *The Watchtower* of February 15, 2009, page 26:

⁹Moreover, Jesus Christ has appointed the faithful and discreet slave “over all his belongings”—all Kingdom interests on earth. (Matt. 24:47) Included among these belongings are the facilities at the world headquarters of Jehovah’s Witnesses, at branch offices in various lands, and at Assembly Halls and Kingdom Halls worldwide. Included too is the work of Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making. Would anyone assign someone he did not trust to keep and use his valuable things?

The Watchtower of July 15, 2013, page 7, says:

Also, as we considered in paragraph 12, Jesus’ ‘arriving’ mentioned at Matthew 25:31 refers to that same future time of judgment. *So it is reasonable to conclude that Jesus’ arrival to appoint the faithful slave over all his belongings, mentioned at Matthew 24:46, 47, also applies to his future coming, during the great tribulation.* (My italics.)

The book *Organized to Do Jehovah’s Will*, 19, ¶8, says:

During the great tribulation, when Jesus comes to pronounce and execute judgment on this wicked system, he will appoint the faithful slave “over all his belongings.” (Matt. 24:46, 47) *Those who make up the faithful slave will receive their heavenly reward.* (My italics.)

The view expressed in the 2009 *Watchtower* that the words ‘appointed over all his belongings’ referred to the GB being appointed over all of Jesus’ earthly belongings, i.e., branch facilities, Assembly Halls, and Kingdom Halls, was changed in 2013. The new view is that this ‘appointment over all his belongings’ takes place in the future when anointed Christians receive their heavenly reward. So now, when the members of the GB, based on the previous view, have acquired all power and control over these very things, the scriptural theory behind this has been abandoned.

At the start of the elder arrangement, the organization was theocratic, not autocratic. The GB decided which literature should be published, and they had control over the headquarters in the USA and over all the branch offices. But they did not have the control over the local congregations and their money, nor over the Kingdom Halls and Assembly Halls. Neither did

they function as a government over the community of Jehovah's Witnesses.

The situation today is very different because the GB has assumed all power and control. I cannot think of a better example of autocratic rule than the example with nurses that I mentioned in the introduction. Nurses care for patients, but on rare occasions, a doctor may ascribe a blood transfusion and ask a Witness nurse to administer it. This has been a matter of conscience on the part of each nurse. But now the GB has forbidden it, thereby overruling the consciences of the nurses. This shows that the members of the GB believe that they have absolute power over the individual Witnesses and the whole organization. But this is based on gradual power-grabs through the years since 1972. And this autocratic organization is very different from the organization in 1972 and the organization of the first-century Christian congregations. As we see from the table below, the pendulum has swung from one extreme to the other.

THE POWER STRUGGLE IN THE GOVERNING BODY IN THE 1980S AND 1990S

How could the members of the GB change the balanced view they had in 1972 and through most of the 20th century to the extreme view of the 21st century? The reason is the outcome of a power struggle in the GB in the 1980s and 1990s. After I published the first edition of my book, I received several emails from brothers who worked at headquarters in Brooklyn in the mentioned time period, including emails from one who served in the inner circle at Bethel. These have first-hand knowledge of the power struggle, and they have given me many details of what happened.

On one side was Ted Jaracz, a member of the GB from 1974 to 2010. According to several Witnesses, he was strongly against higher education, and he did not like intellectual brothers. He was an advocate of making laws and rules in addition to those found in the Bible, in order to have a "clean organization." And he was a person who was seeking power. On the other side was Lloyd Barry, a member of the GB from 1974 to 1999. His personality was the very opposite of Jaracz. He was educated at a university, and he viewed education as an asset, including deep Bible studies. He did not want to make many rules, and he was not a person who was seeking power. One brother who worked at headquarters for

17 years in the 1980s and 1990s wrote: “Barry was loved and respected by his men, and he was the exact opposite of T. Jaracz. Most of the members of the GB supported Barry against Jaracz.”

In 1992, Barry wrote the balanced article on higher education that I will discuss in chapter 4. In the following years, Jaracz got more power, and in 1999, Barry died. After that, Jaracz got more influence, and when important decisions were made by the GB, his opinion often was listened to, according to my informant from the inner circle. This brother also wrote that when new members were added to the GB, Jaracz had the final say, and therefore, persons with the same hardline views as himself were chosen. This is the case with the five new members that were chosen between 1994 and 2005.

The situation “on the ground” supports the words of my informant. In 2005, when Jaracz was the dominant man of the GB, the crusade against higher education started in earnest, and it continues until this day when the five mentioned members are still on the GB. From 2006 on, a number of new rules and laws were made, including several new disfellowshipping offenses. And this continued until the new book for elders was released in 2019.

The conclusion is that the situation today, when the organization has a hierarchical structure similar to the Catholic Church, with a great number of extrabiblical laws and rules, and where total obedience to the GB is required, is the result of the power struggle in the GB in the 1980s and 1990s where Ted Jaracz came out as the victor.⁶²

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1879-1937: THE ORGANIZATION WAS DEMOCRATIC

- The elders were voted in by the congregation members.
- The elders took the lead in the congregations.
- The congregations were independent of the Watchtower Society.

62. A detailed discussion of the power struggle is found in the article “The power struggle inside the Governing Body in the 1980s and 1990s,” in the category “The Governing Body” on www.mybelovedreligion.no.

1938: THE FIRST STEP IN THE DIRECTION OF A THEOCRATIC ORGANIZATION

- The congregation servants (elders) were appointed by the Watchtower Society.

1945: THE SECOND STEP IN THE DIRECTION OF A THEOCRATIC ORGANIZATION

The members of the Watchtower Society were chosen on the basis of spiritual qualities and no longer on the basis of monetary contributions.

1971/1972: THE WHOLE ORGANIZATION BECOMES THEOCRATIC

- The elder arrangement was introduced, and the elders took the lead in each congregation.
- One group of elders—the Governing Body—took the lead in the whole organization.
- The bodies of elders were, to a great extent, independent of the GB.

21ST CENTURY: THE WHOLE ORGANIZATION BECOMES AUTOCRATIC

- During the last part of the 20th century, the members of the GB gave themselves more and more power at the expense of the bodies of elders.
- The GB functions as a government for JW with unlimited power over the doctrines, the assets, and the money.
- The organization is now hierarchical, with the GB at the top and the branch committees and circuit overseers functioning just like the clergy functions in the Catholic Church and other denominations.
- The bodies of elders have no independent power, but they follow the decisions made by the GB, and these decisions are in reality orders.

THE NEW VIEW OF SOLICITING MONEY

Paul speaks about gifts in 2 Corinthians 9:7 (NWT13):

Let each one do just as he has resolved in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

The expression “under compulsion” is translated from the Greek word *anangke*, and BAGD has the following meanings: “necessity, compulsion of any kind.” A typical example of a violation of this scripture is tithing—a regular payment of 10 percent of a person’s income.

As for assets and money, the members of the GB of the 20th century followed the Biblical procedure of gifts of free will, and they never were soliciting money. The present GB has been willing to abandon the procedures of the previous GB by soliciting money on a large scale and thereby violate the biblical principle in 1 Corinthians 9:7 of voluntary gifts. When I see the situation today when the GB has the power over the assets of the congregations and the money, it is clear to me that the GB for many years has followed a plan that now has been realized. This is a plan based on the view expressed in *The Watchtower* of February 15, 2009, page 26, that is quoted on page 142, that the GB should have the power over everything.

THE STEPS TAKEN TO ACQUIRE THE OWNERSHIP OF KINGDOM HALLS

Regarding Kingdom Halls, the *Organization* book from 1972 says:

However, large numbers of congregations have chosen to purchase property and build their own Kingdom Hall, suited to their needs. It is up to all the dedicated members of the congregation to decide what they want to do in this matter.

If the congregation decides to build a Kingdom Hall, the body of elders usually designates as a building committee certain brothers who are very much interested in this particular construction work of the congregation and who may be good businessmen. . . . In connection with the ownership and operation of the Kingdom Hall it may be necessary to form an association. Sometimes it must be a legal corporation.⁶³

The members of the congregations owned the Kingdom Halls, and a committee from the congregation was overseeing and maintaining the Hall.

In 2008, the three congregations using the Kingdom Hall in Bogstadveien 39 in Oslo, Norway, decided to renovate the hall. The GB had, at this time, taken the first step on the road to take over the Kingdom Halls. The branch office had created committees of building experts in a few places in Norway. The procedure at that time was that if a body of elders wanted help, they could ask the closest committee to give suggestions regarding the renovation, or regarding the building of a new Kingdom Hall. We did that, and the building experts gave good advice and were of great help. Sometime later, the next step was taken. The authority

63. *Organization for Kingdom-Preaching and Disciple-Making*, page 104.

of the committee of building experts changed. Now it was mandatory to ask the committee for help in connection with the renovation or building of a new Kingdom Hall.⁶⁴ And now the committee had the top responsibility and not the body of elders. The third step was that the committee of experts took over the responsibility of each Kingdom Hall.⁶⁵ But the congregation members still owned the Kingdom Hall.

At the end of 2010, my wife and I moved to Stavern in the Larvik county. In our Kingdom Hall, there were three flats with Witness families, and other Kingdom Halls had rooms for old pioneers or one or more flats for families. In 2013, the congregations received a letter from the branch office saying that every tenant in each Kingdom Hall had to move out. Some elders thought that this was not a fine way to treat the tenants because they were only given a short time before they had to leave. But the bodies of elders, of course, did what the letter said.

The congregations in Larvik had, for several years, been looking for a piece of land to build a new Kingdom Hall. A piece of land was available, but now a new arrangement had been instituted. The congregation members and the elders no longer had any role in acquiring the new Kingdom Hall. Representatives of the branch office bought the piece of land and constructed a Kingdom Hall of their choice. And it was the branch office and not the congregations that owns the new Kingdom Hall. What happened to the old Kingdom Hall? This Hall was owned by the members of the three congregations. But neither they nor the elders were asked. But representatives of the branch office sold the old Kingdom Hall, and the money was, without any approval of the congregation members, transferred to the branch office. This was a power-grab of property on the part of the branch office.

The branch office paid for the piece of land and for the construction of the Larvik Kingdom Hall. But as I will show below, the congregations are required to send money to the branch office every month. And when we add the sums that each congregation contributes to the branch office, and the money that the branch office gets from sales of Kingdom Halls, and subtract the expenses the branch office has for building new Kingdom Halls and the loans that were canceled, the branch office has a huge surplus

64. Letters from the Norwegian branch office of January 8, 2008 and May 1, 2008.

65. The letter from the Norwegian branch office of March 1, 2006 shows that the committee of experts had not yet taken over the responsibility for the Kingdom Halls.

of money. In 2018, The Norwegian Watchtower Society received 14 258 332 kroner from the Norwegian state. Contributions, including inherited money, were 69 889 749 kroner, expenses for building Kingdom Halls were 11 077 710 kroner, and 58 225 889 kroner were sent to the Watchtower Society in other countries.

Steps to take over Kingdom Halls: 1) Committees of building consultants *could* be used; 2) Committees of building consultants *had to* be used; 3) Committees of building consultants took over the responsibility for the Kingdom Halls; 4) Tenants had to move out; 5) Kingdom Halls were expropriated by the branch office; 6) Hundreds of Kingdom Halls were sold in different countries, and the branch offices received the money.

Kingdom Halls in other countries were also expropriated by the branch offices. Sometimes this office fused two congregations, so one Kingdom Hall could be sold. Other times the branch office decided that two, three, or four congregations could use the same Kingdom Hall, and the vacant Kingdom Halls were sold. This caused problems for many brothers and sisters, particularly for the older ones and those who did not have a car—some had to travel long distances to come to the meetings.

What happened in the United Kingdom illustrates the situation. A letter from the branch office in London of November 8, 2019, says that each congregation should make a resolution in order to dissolve its status as an individual charity and become a branch of The Kingdom Hall Trust (KHT). This means that the congregations no longer own their Kingdom Halls, but each Hall is owned by the KHT, and the KHT leadership can do what they want with each Kingdom Hall, including selling it.⁶⁶

FROM SOLICITING MONEY TO “TITHING”

An article in *The Watchtower* of 1960 discussed how the expenses of Jehovah’s Witnesses were met. The article said in part:

From the time the Watch Tower Society was formed in 1884 it has never solicited money. . . .

66. <https://jwwatch.org/news/jehovahs-witness-uk-headquarters-dissolves-kingdom-hall-charities-seizes-full-control-of-property-and-finances>.

It is the privilege of Jehovah's Witnesses and interested persons to support financially the theocratic activities in their respective lands. To an extent, they can do it locally by helping with the expenses of the congregation meeting place, or Kingdom Hall. Each Kingdom Hall has a contribution box where voluntary contributions can be made without anyone knowing how much a person contributes. *No plea for money is ever made to the congregation, no perfumed coin envelopes are sent to them for contributions and no pledges are ever asked.* Like the free-will contributions made by the widow and by others in Jerusalem, so the members of each congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses voluntarily drop in the contribution box at the Kingdom Hall whatever they feel able to give. . . .

Each Witness wants to share in financing the Kingdom work, no matter how small his offering may have to be. He appreciates the admonition given by the apostle Paul: "Let each one do just as he has resolved in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." —2 Cor. 9:7.

That the Society may plan its expenses for the year, it needs to know approximately how much Jehovah's witnesses and interested persons plan to contribute. *What they promise is not a pledge but merely an estimation of what they hope to donate during the year.* Call it their contribution prospects. It is a voluntary promise such as was made by the Corinthians: "I thought it necessary to encourage the brothers to come to you in advance and to get ready in advance your bountiful gift previously promised."—2 Cor. 9:5. (My italics.)

If you intend to make one or more contributions to the Watch Tower Society during the next twelve months, send a card or letter to the branch office in your country stating what you hope to contribute to that office to help the work of preaching God's Kingdom.⁶⁷

The Organization book published in 1972 says regarding monetary contributions:

Within each congregation there are expenses that must be met. *No collection is ever taken, nor is there any assessment of dues,* but contribution boxes are provided at our meeting places so that each one can have a part "just as he has resolved in his heart."—2 Cor. 9:7. (My italics.)

This money is used principally to provide a Kingdom Hall in which the congregation can meet, and to care for its upkeep. If there is more

67. *The Watchtower* of 1960, pages 265–267.

money than is needed to care for these expenses, the body of elders may discuss how these funds can best be used to further the work of preaching and disciple-making. Then they present to the congregation a written resolution containing their recommendations.⁶⁸

The articles in *The Watchtower* and the Organization book show that everything in connection with money was voluntary—gifts must come from the heart. And the Watchtower Society had never been soliciting money. The procedure before and after 1972, and until the new arrangement in 2014, was that the daily expenses of the congregation were automatically paid without asking the congregation members. But any spending of money beyond the daily expenses had to be decided by a vote of the congregation members on the basis of a resolution from the elders. Whether to build or buy a Kingdom Hall and what kind of hall, was decided by a vote of the congregation members. The congregation members owned the Kingdom Hall, met its expenses, and decided what to do with the Kingdom Hall.

The letter of March 29, 2014 said that a new arrangement for financing and building Kingdom Halls and Assembly Halls had been instituted. The loans of the congregations from the Kingdom Hall Fund were canceled—the congregations did not need to pay back these loans. And all congregations were asked to make a resolution so the congregation could pay an amount of money to the branch office every month.⁶⁹ The stated purpose of these contributions was to build Kingdom Halls and Assembly Halls in different parts of the world.

The purpose of the new arrangement was, of course, to get more money from the members of each congregation. This was a new course because now the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society was soliciting money, and that was not done before. A. H. Macmillan (*Faith on the March*, page 182) tells that even when new buildings were built in Brooklyn in 1926, 1946, and 1955, there was no soliciting of money. Individual Witnesses gave loans to the Society, and these loans were paid back.

Instead of borrowing money from a bank, we had borrowed it from our own people and the Society gave them a note at the regular rate of interest,

68. *Organization for Kingdom-Preaching and Disciple-making*, page 149.

69. When the congregations are asked to do something, this is the same as an order. The loyalty to the GB is so strong that no elder would dream of disobeying any instruction or suggestion given by the organization.

although many of Jehovah's witnesses waived the interest. It was understood by those receiving notes that they could request their money in full at any time if they might unexpectedly have a need for it. These received their money at once and the rest were paid off as the regular voluntary contributions made it possible. Before the notes had matured, all had been settled.

The Watchtower article that I already have quoted says that if someone plans to donate money to the Society, they may send a letter:

That the Society may plan its expenses for the year, it needs to know approximately how much Jehovah's Witnesses and interested persons plan to contribute. What they promise is not a pledge but merely an estimation of what they hope to donate during the year.⁷⁰

The quotation above shows that the Watchtower Society planned its operations in the same way as a family does, on the basis of its resources. But with the new arrangement, the Watchtower Society goes in the opposite direction, beyond its resources. Thirteen thousand Kingdom Halls and 35 Assembly Halls should be built, and therefore "there is a need for very big economic recourses."⁷¹

1884: We have never solicited money.

1960: We have never solicited money.

2014: There is a great need for very big economic resources.

In every congregation, all the members were asked how much they could contribute every month. They wrote the sum anonymously on a piece of paper, but still, it was a pledge. Based on these notes, the elders made a resolution saying that the congregation would send a certain sum of money every month. Moreover, the branch office had written that if a congregation had sent the promised sum of money to the branch office, and the congregation had more money than the normal expenses for three months, the surplus should be donated to the branch office.

In my view, this new system is something between the donation plates that other religions use and tithing. When the donation plate comes, a person is seen by the others, and there is a pressure to give something. But still, the person himself or herself decides how much to offer. And others

70. *The Watchtower* of 1960, page 267.

71. Letter from the Scandinavian branch office of March 29, 2014.

do not usually see the amount that is put on the plate. In the previous system, money was put in the contribution box in the Kingdom Hall, and the congregation members knew that the money was used to pay for the expenses of their Kingdom Hall. If the congregation had extra money, this money would not be sent to the branch office, but the elders would decide what to do with the money, and present a resolution to the congregation. In most cases, extra money was put into a bank, in case of additional future expenditures, or as savings for a future Kingdom Hall. However, payments for the magazines were, of course, sent to the Branch office every month.

1960: If there is more money than is needed to care for the Kingdom Hall, you must decide how to use this money in the best way for the Kingdom interests.

2014: Send the promised sum of money to the branch office each month. If the congregation has more money than needed for the expenses for three months, send this money to the branch office.

Now the publishers would have to give more because not only would congregation expenses have to be covered, but a rather large sum of money would have to be sent to the branch office every month. The word “tithing” is put in quotation marks because there is no requirement to give 10% of one’s income; the sum is decided by each individual and so is much lower than 10%. But the system comes close to tithing because it *requires* a sum of money from the congregation to be paid to the branch office every month, and every member of the congregation is asked to submit a pledge of a specific amount of money that he or she will contribute. Moreover, when the congregation has a surplus of money after expenses are paid for three months, this surplus must be sent to the branch office as well.

There is also another procedure that focuses on money. Two times a year, there is a one-day assembly in all of the Assembly Halls owned by the branch, and each circuit (about 15 congregations) must pay \$13,000 to the branch office for the use of the Assembly Hall. Because the money paid by the congregations each month to the branch office really goes toward building and renovating Kingdom Halls and Assembly Halls, the expenses that the Assembly Hall has, basically includes electricity and water, are just a fraction of the \$13,000 that each circuit must pay for using the Assembly Hall. So again, the focus is on collecting as much money as possible, even by putting, in effect, a tax on the congregations for using the Assembly Hall.

2013: The circuit uses the Assembly Hall for free.

2019: The circuit must pay a rent of \$13,000 for the use of the Assembly Hall for the circuit assembly.

The Watchtower Society in the USA has sold 32 buildings in Brooklyn for 2,194,625,000 dollars.⁷² But even though this is a great sum of money, at one session of Watchtower Broadcasting, brother Lett indicated to the audience that this was not enough. There was still a great need for more money. So this member of the GB on this occasion was soliciting money, against the Bible and against the tradition of the Watchtower Society.

2017: JW Broadcasting has been used for soliciting money.

When I said above that the great focus on money started in 2014, that is not strictly correct. The letter from the Norwegian branch office of January 30, 2009 discusses expenses for Kingdom Halls in the world. In order to cover these expenses, the office calculated the amount of money each congregation should contribute each month on the basis of the number of publishers in the congregation. The letter speaks of “the suggested amount of money.” But a suggestion in a letter is the same as an order. This is also seen in the following words: “If the amount of money is too large for the congregation to pay, you can perhaps split it in two or three payments.” An experience from Denmark confirms that a suggestion is the same as an order.

A Witness in Copenhagen, who is an elder in an English-speaking congregation, told me the following story in connection with a similar letter that was sent to all congregations in Denmark. The English congregation had many members from Africa and Asia who had very little money. So the congregation was not able to pay the required amount each month. After some time, the congregation owed the branch office \$7,000. Three elders from the congregation went to the branch office to explain the situation. But there was no exception, and the congregation had to pay the full amount that it owed, regardless of their situation.

2 Corinthians 9:7: Free-will gifts are resolved in the heart without any compulsion.

Denmark 2005: The branch office demanded that each congregation had to pay a certain amount of money for each

72. Source: Jan Frode Nilsen.

member to the Kingdom Hall Fund, regardless of whether the congregations could afford it or not.

The discussion above shows that the present GB has abandoned the long tradition of the Watchtower Society never to be soliciting money, and that gifts should never be given under compulsion. Even though the purpose of building Kingdom Halls is good, the way the GB has used its power to get as much money as possible is also in my view, questionable. To expropriate Kingdom Halls and to sell some of them without asking the members of the congregations or the bodies of elders, is, in reality, a power-grab of property. The argument for this is as follows: “Everything belongs to Jehovah. We are his ‘faithful slave,’ who will be appointed over all his belongings. So we do with the properties of JW as we deem fit.”

There is also another problem with this procedure. In order to sell as many Kingdom Halls as possible, one method is to fuse some congregations, resulting in one Kingdom Hall becoming available for sale. Another method is to order two, three, or four congregations with three or four Kingdom Halls to use the same Kingdom Hall. The letter from the Norwegian branch office of August 1, 2017 says:

The branch office can decide that as many as three or four congregations can use the same Kingdom Hall, in order to use the premises to the full and keep the expenses as low as possible.

These words show that the members of the congregations have nothing to say in the matter; they must simply follow the orders of the branch office.

I know that these procedures have caused problems for many Witnesses in Europe and in the USA. To travel to the Kingdom Hall by car can be expensive because of the many toll roads. Some older ones who do not have a car may have to use two buses or a bus and a train to come to the Kingdom Hall. So I wonder if it is better to sell Kingdom Halls in Europe and the USA, with all the problems that this can cause for some Witnesses, in order to build Kingdom Halls in Africa, or whether it is better to let the Witnesses in Africa use their relatively primitive Kingdom Halls until such time that funds can more readily become available, and save the European Witnesses from the mentioned problems.

The words of Paul were: “Let each one do just as he has resolved in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” These words are no longer followed by the GB.

I would like to stress that I am certain that neither the members of the GB nor other prominent Witnesses use any of the incoming money for personal gain. All full-time servants at the headquarters and the branch offices, including the members of the GB, receive only a small sum of money each month for their personal expenses. My concern is the strong focus on money in the organization today, and the methods that are used to get as much money as possible from the individual Witnesses—methods that break with the 120-year long tradition of the Watchtower Society and that do not accord with the principle of voluntary giving in the Christian Greek Scriptures.

CONCLUSION

The Watchtower of 1946 showed that there was a huge contrast between the hierarchical Catholic Church and JW. The organization of JW was not “*the divinely appointed Custodian and Interpreter of the Bible*” or “*the teacher of God’s servants and witnesses.*” *The Watchtower* contained articles dealing with Bible subjects, and the readers were invited to engage in interactive learning by searching the Bible. The leaders of the Watchtower Society did not make human commandments that the Witnesses had to follow, and the relationship between the leaders and the individual Witnesses was based on trust and not on any dictation by the leaders.

When the elder arrangement was introduced in 1972, the organization was theocratic. The elders were appointed by the Watchtower Society, which also made the programs for the meetings and assemblies. But the body of elders in each congregation was, to a great extent, independent of the Watchtower Society. This is particularly seen by the fact that the circuit overseers, who visited the congregations as representatives of the Watchtower Society, had no power over the bodies of elders.

In 1976, the bodies of elders started to lose their power. And from then on, the power gradually was taken away from them and transferred to the GB. But the congregations still owned their Kingdom Halls and decided how they should use their money.

From 2009 on, different steps were taken to transfer the ownership of the Kingdom Halls and Assembly Halls from the congregations to the

Watchtower Society. And in 2014, each congregation was asked to (= ordered to) send an amount of money decided by each congregation to the Watchtower Society each month. The congregations also got the directive that if they had more money than needed to cover their expenses for three months, this surplus of money should also be sent to the Watchtower Society.

It is quite ironic that The Watchtower Society, which so strongly has distanced itself from the Catholic Church, today is more hierarchical and autocratic than the Catholic Church. The GB has unlimited power over the doctrines, the assets, and the money. Even the translators of the revised NWT13 had to ask the GB for permission to use particular English expressions and words in their translation, even though none of the GB members know the original Bible languages. The branch committees are completely obedient to the GB and implement everything that it decides. The circuit overseers have much power, including the appointing of elders, and they represent the GB vis-à-vis the congregations. And the bodies of elders have been trained to put into action everything the GB has decided, without asking any questions. The individual Witnesses have also been taught that the GB is “the faithful and discreet slave” and to believe everything that the GB has written or said.

The discussion in this chapter has shown that there is no support in the Bible for the hierarchical system that exists among JW today. This system does not resemble the system in the Christian congregations in the first century CE, and it is very different from the theocratic system of the elder arrangement that was introduced in 1972. A suggestion for an alternative theocratic organization with a “Coordinating Group” instead of the Governing Body is found on pages 441-442. I do not doubt the sincerity of the members of the GB, who have introduced the present hierarchical system. But I doubt their competence and their judgments in this and many other matters.

There was no ongoing, sitting governing body in the first century CE. Therefore, the present Governing Body has no scriptural legacy and should, therefore, be dissolved. The hierarchical and autocratic system the GB has constructed has no support in the Bible. In fact, it violates several Bible Principles.

The new procedure of soliciting money breaks with the 120-year-long tradition of the Watchtower Society, and do not accord with the principle of voluntary giving in the Christian Greek Scriptures.

APPENDIX

DEDICATION TO JEHOVAH'S ORGANIZATION

1942-1985: DEDICATION IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, THE SON, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

1985-2021: DEDICATION IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, THE SON, AND JEHOVAH'S ORGANIZATION

I was baptized on November 30, 1961, and while I do not remember the exact words in the questions that I answered, I am certain that they harmonized with the words of *The Watchtower* of December 15, 1956, page 763:

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.

I have given the talk in connection with baptism at several assemblies, and I remember that my outline several times has said something like: "You are not symbolizing your dedication to a work, or to an organization, but to a person, to Jehovah God." Corroborating these words in the outline are the questions that I asked at the end of the talk:

1) Have you recognized yourself before Jehovah 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?⁷³

But in 1985, the words of the baptismal questions were changed, and the focus was now on the organization instead of on the holy spirit. The questions are listed in *The Watchtower* of June 1, 1985, page 31:

73. *The Watchtower* of July 1, 1956, page 407.

1) On the basis of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, have you repented of your sins and dedicated yourself to Jehovah to do his will?

1) Do you understand that your dedication and baptism identify you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with God's spirit-directed organization?

On the website [jw.org](http://www.jw.org), we find an article entitled “Choose to serve Jehovah” from January 2021. It contains the two baptismal questions:

1) Have you repented of your sins, dedicated yourself to Jehovah, and accepted his way of salvation through Jesus Christ?

2) Do you understand that your baptism identifies you as one of Jehovah's Witnesses in association with Jehovah's organization?⁷⁴

The questions from 1985 and 2021 are quite similar; the difference is that the second question from 1985 uses the expression “God's spirit-directed organization,” but the question from 2021 uses “Jehovah's organization.” Jesus said that his followers should be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the holy spirit. (Matthew 28:19) Between 1956 and 1985, the holy spirit was mentioned in the second question. From 1985 on, the holy spirit was implied by the use of the expression, “God's spirit-directed organization.” But in the questions from 2021, the holy spirit is not mentioned at all.

However, the biggest difference between the two questions that were asked before and after 1985 is that after that time, persons were baptized into the organization of Jehovah's Witnesses. So, formally speaking, Jehovah's organization had taken the place of the holy spirit. Why was this change made? *The Watchtower* of April 15, 1987, page 15, footnote, has an explanation:

Recently the two questions addressed to baptismal candidates were simplified so that candidates could answer with full comprehension of what is involved in coming into intimate relationship with God and his earthly organization.

This explanation is strange indeed. The use of the word “simplified” means that a saying is expressed in basic, simpler words, or it is abbreviated, so it is easier to understand. But what actually has happened with the baptismal questions is that something has been added, namely, “Jehovah's witnesses” and (first) “in association with God's spirit-

74. <https://www.jw.org/en/>.

directed organization,” and (second) “in association with Jehovah’s organization.” These additions change the focus of one’s dedication. My focus when I gave the baptismal talks was: “You are not symbolizing your dedication to a work, or to an organization, but to a person, to Jehovah God.” Now the focus is that a person has dedicated himself to Jehovah *and* to Jehovah’s organization, which means that the dedication is, in reality, to the Governing Body who has dictatorial power in the organization. This is a clear violation of the command of Jesus to baptize persons in the name of the Father, the Son, and the holy spirit.” And in the baptismal questions that are used at present, the holy spirit is no longer even mentioned.

Jesus said that new disciples should be baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and the holy spirit. Today, new disciples are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son, and Jehovah’s organization.

THE EXTREME VIEW ON HIGHER EDUCATION

—REVIEW—

This chapter discusses one of the militant sides of the organization—the crusade against higher education.

The Governing Body has strongly spoken against higher education. Because of this, tens thousands of young Witnesses have been pressured not to pursue higher education. This has caused harm and loss for many because it has been more difficult for them to find a job without a good education, by which they can care for themselves and their families.

In this chapter, I will show that the GB has painted a caricature of higher education, and information in *The Watchtower* regarding higher education is badly flawed. The members of the GB have tried to force their personal views of higher education on young Witnesses. And this is a violation of one of the basic principles that elders are taught.

In 1992, *The Watchtower* published a rather balanced article on education. It showed that in some countries, more education was needed to get a decent job than some years ago. The article also showed that the decision regarding how much education to take, rested with the person himself or herself.

The Watchtower of 2005 also published an article on higher education. This is a very bad article from the point of view of accuracy and the ethics of the writer. All the sources referred to are misused—they do not say what the article claims that they say. And its conclusion that “more and more educators are seriously doubting the value of higher education today” has no basis. The author of the article and those who checked it before publication show that they have no idea of what higher education really is!

The extreme view of G. Lösch, the longest-serving member of the GB, regarding higher education, was expressed in a talk he gave as zone overseer in Italy in 2005. He went so far as to ask those who studied at a college or university to immediately stop their studies. He even threatened them that they would be accountable to Jehovah for their choice. He also compared pursuing higher education by attempting to commit suicide by shooting oneself. A small number of those who shoot themselves survive. But you should not count on that, were his words.

The Watchtower article of 2005 includes several false statements. And throughout the article, the author is manipulating the readers based on the following false conclusions:

* Higher education is pursued to become rich and influential.

* If one pursues higher education, one advances the present system.

* A university education has little value in connection with getting a good job.

In the Watchtower literature after the year 2005, there have been several statements questioning *the motives* of those who pursue higher education. The following claims are found:

* By pursuing higher education, one will be absorbed in promoting one's own interests.

* One is wasting valuable youthful years.

* One trusts in educational systems for security, and does not trust in Jehovah.

* One will miss meetings.

* Persons are seeking great things for themselves, are ambitious to realize personal aspirations.

* One uses higher education as a stepping-stone to prestige and an affluent life.

* One is "minding lofty things."

* One trusts in higher education to secure a comfortable life now, and does not trust in Jehovah.

* One shows a lack of faith.

All these claims are false. And they question the competence of the members of the GB as leaders for the worldwide organization of Jehovah's Witnesses.

In June 2019, the elders received a new book, and one of the headings was: "Situations that may require a review of an appointed brother's qualifications." One of the reasons is quoted below:

He or a Member of His Household Pursues Higher Education:

If an appointed brother, his wife, or his children pursue higher education, does his life pattern show that he puts Kingdom interests first in his life? (w05 10/1 p. 27 par. 6) Does he respect what has been published by the faithful slave on the dangers of higher education?¹

In 2009, the elders got a letter, which among other things, discussed higher education. The instruction was that in the cases mentioned above, the elder had to answer a number of questions. One of the questions was if he agreed with the warnings from "the slave" regarding higher education. If he did not do that, he was not qualified to continue to serve as an elder. Some elders have told me that they were grilled for several hours because their children pursued a rather short college study.

1. "Shepherd The Flock Of God," chapter 8, point 30.

To be frank: This is a human tradition invented by the GB, and it violates one of the basic principles that elders are taught, namely not to influence others with our own personal viewpoints. Everything that we teach others must be directly based on the Bible, and higher education is not mentioned in the Bible. I will again quote *The Watchtower* of October 1, 1972, page 589, where we read: **“Where God’s Word does not itself ‘draw the line,’ no human has the right to add to that Word by doing so.”**

Moreover, all the references to different sources in *The Watchtower* of October 1, 2005 showing how dangerous higher education is, are taken out of context. The sources do not say what the article claims that they say. I will show this in detail below. And even if some of the problems mentioned in *The Watchtower* did exist in the US, they did not and do not exist in Scandinavia. Because of the extreme viewpoints of the GB regarding higher education, a significant number of young Witnesses who planned to be nurses, kindergarten teachers, elementary school teachers, IT technicians, and engineers, have been pressured not to pursue this education. In many instances, this has had a negative influence on their lives and often on their families because it is difficult to get a good job in Norway and many other countries if one has only a high school education.

SOME BIBLE PRINCIPLES THAT ARE VIOLATED BY THE GOVERNING BODY’S VIEW ON HIGHER EDUCATION (NWT84):

“Who are you to judge the house servant of another? To his own master he stands or falls.” (Romans 14:4)

“But let each one prove what his own work is, and then he will have cause for exultation in regards to himself alone, and not in comparison with the other person. For each one will carry his own load.” (Galatians 6:4, 5)

“One there is that is lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But you, who are you to be judging [your] neighbor?” (James 4:12)

“Not that we are the masters over your faith.” (2 Corinthians 1:24)

By influencing others with their personal viewpoints regarding higher education, the members of the GB, in reality, have become “masters over your faith.” (2 Corinthians 1:24)

THE NATURE OF THE STRONG PRESSURE AGAINST HIGHER EDUCATION

If an elder or a family member pursues higher education, the elder will be interrogated by the body of elders and most likely lose his position as an elder.

Most elders have a strong bias against higher education because of the influence of the GB, and this is signaled to young Witnesses in MANY different ways.

The Watchtower literature uses very strong words against higher education and questions the motives of those who pursue higher education.

In what follows, I will show how the GB has tried hard to influence others, and that the warnings they have given to a great extent are based on a false foundation. I will show how the Watchtower literature discredits persons who pursue higher education and ascribes bad motives to them. And I will show that, contrary to the view of the GB, higher education is in no way more dangerous for Christian than education in high schools, vocational schools, trade schools, or technical schools.

There can, of course, be milieus at some universities and colleges where Bible principles are grossly violated. But similar milieus can be found in the other mentioned schools and in workplaces as well. First Corinthians 15:33 says: “Do not be misled. Bad associations spoil useful habits.” A close association with any worldly person may spoil useful habits. However, a student of today—and I speak about universities and colleges in Scandinavia where I have a personal experience—need not have much contact with other students. More than 10% of the students at the University of Oslo are rarely present at the campus. They read for themselves and take Internet courses, and they come to the University only for their exams. And during the Corona pandemic, a great part of the teaching at Universities and High schools have been made via the Internet. In contrast with university students, high school students must have

contact with their classmates for several hours every day. So, from the point of view of 1 Corinthians 15:33, it is more dangerous to attend high school than university. However, Christian children have been taught by their parents from elementary school how to avoid bad associations.

THE VIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE 1990S

The view of the GB in 1992 was more balanced than it is today. I say “more balanced,” because a part of the old negative view of higher education by members of the GB, can also be seen in this article.

The Watchtower of November 1, 1992, page 20, ¶18 says:

This magazine has placed emphasis on the dangers of higher learning, and justifiably so, for much higher education opposes the “healthful teaching” of the Bible. (Titus 2:1; 1 Timothy 6:20, 21) Further, since the 1960’s, many schools of advanced learning have become hotbeds of lawlessness and immorality. “The faithful and discreet slave” has strongly discouraged entering that kind of environment. (Matthew 24:12, 45) It must be admitted, however, that nowadays youngsters meet up with these same dangers in high schools and technical colleges and even in the workplace.

This is a rather balanced description. The article correctly points out that universities teach subjects that contradict the Bible and that many students are immoral. The article also correctly discourages Christians from being a part of an immoral environment. However, by using the words “much”² and “many,” the implication is that there are fields of study that do not contradict the Bible and that not all universities are “hotbeds of lawlessness and immorality.” Moreover, it is pointed out that high

2. The use of the word “much” in connection with university subjects contradicting the Bible did not fit Norwegian universities and colleges in 1992, and neither does it fit today. Because I was a student in 1992, I can say that *most* of the subjects taught, such as foreign languages, IT, medicine, economics, engineer science, mathematics, chemistry, physics, etc. are neutral as far as the Bible is concerned. In Norway and Scandinavia, therefore, *most* of the subjects studied at universities and colleges do not contradict the Bible. Students, indeed, have the same low morals as other young persons, but it is definitely not true that Norwegian and Scandinavian universities and colleges are “hotbeds of lawlessness.” On the contrary, because students are focused on their studies, and because they know that it is an advantage for them to obey the laws, my experience is that they are more law-abiding than other persons. This is my experience after I have studied and taught Semitic languages at the University of Oslo for 25 years. I retired at the end of 2010.

schools, technical schools, and workplaces may have the same dangers. In spite of this, young Witnesses are not discouraged from attending high schools, technical schools, or from taking jobs in commercial firms. So, the article is not a general condemnation of higher education *per se*, but rather a cry saying: “Beware! Consider the environment and your motive before you choose higher education.” The article discusses the following subjects:

1) The requirements for getting a job have changed, and higher education might be needed to get a decent job (page 17, ¶9, ¶12):

How much education does a young Christian need in order to respect these Bible principles and meet his Christian obligations? This varies from country to country. By and large, however, it seems that the general trend in many lands is that the level of schooling required to earn decent wages is now higher than it was a few years ago. Reports received from branches of the Watchtower Society in different parts of the world indicate that in many places it is difficult to find jobs with decent wages after completing simply the minimum schooling required by law or in some countries even after finishing secondary or high school.

A balanced view of education can help. For many young people of the world, education is a status symbol, something to help them climb the social ladder, the key to a prosperous, materialistic life-style. For others, schooling is a chore to be dispensed with as quickly as possible. Neither of these views is appropriate for true Christians. *What then, might be termed “a balanced view”?* *Christians should regard education as a means to an end.* In these last days, their purpose is to serve Jehovah as much and as effectively as possible. If, in the country where they live, minimal or even high school education will only allow them to find jobs providing insufficient income to support themselves as pioneers, then supplementary education or training might be considered. This would be with the specific goal of fulltime service. (My italics.)

2) It is not good to stop one’s education too early (page 18, ¶11):

It has been reported that in some countries many well-intentioned youngsters have left school after completing the minimum required schooling in order to become pioneers. They had no trade or secular qualifications. If they were not helped by their parents, they had to find part-time work. Some have had to accept jobs that required them to work very long hours to make ends meet. Becoming physically exhausted, they gave up the pioneer ministry.

3) Higher education can be combined with the Christian service (page 18, ¶13):

One sister in the Philippines was the family breadwinner, but she wanted to pioneer. The branch reports: “She has been able to do this because she has received additional education to qualify as a certified public accountant.”³

4) Education can be positive for the preaching work (page 18, ¶13):

[Philippine Branch:] “We have quite a number who are studying and at the same time have been able to arrange their schedules to pioneer. Generally, they become better publishers as they are more studious, provided they do not become overly ambitious in worldly pursuits.”

5) The one who must decide as to the length of his or her education is the youngster, after having discussed the issue with the parents. The choice each one makes should not be criticized (pages 19–20, ¶16–19):

¶16. Who decides whether a young Christian should undertake further education or training? The Bible principle of headship comes into play here. (1 Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 6:1) On this basis parents will surely want to guide their children in the choice of a trade or occupation and consequently in the amount of education that will be needed. . . . So when parents and young Christians today, after carefully and prayerfully weighing the pros and cons, decide for or against postsecondary studies, others in the congregation should not criticize them. ¶17. If Christian parents responsibly decide to provide their children with further education after high school, that is their prerogative. The period of these studies would vary according to the type of trade or occupation selected. . . . ¶18. If additional courses are taken, certainly the motive should not be to shine scholastically or to carve out a prestigious worldly career. . . . ¶19. Should supplementary education be decided upon, a young witness would do well, if at all possible, to take this while living at home, thus being able to maintain normal Christian study habits, meeting attendance, and preaching activity.

The whole article is quite balanced and positive, and it places things where they should be. The main point in the article, which is, as far as I know, stated for the first time, is that today (in 1992) there may be a need to have more education than some years ago—in some countries even higher education may be necessary to get a decent job. The young Witness

3. A certified public accountant in Norway has 4 to 5 years of university education.

must decide as to the length of the education. And no other persons than their parents have the right to influence their choice or criticize them.

The view of the article is confirmed by other sources. On January 1, 2006, we got a set of revised outlines for public lectures. The revision was made before this date, and the new view of 2005 was not incorporated. What the outline discussing education says, is balanced: “All Christians who consider further education [after completing the required education] should consider the advantages and the drawbacks (g98, 3.8, p. 20).” On page 21, the *Awake!* article (g) says: “At any rate, such decisions are of a personal nature. Christians ought not to criticize or judge one another on this matter. James wrote, ‘Who are you to be judging your neighbor?’ (James 4:12)” *Awake!* of August 22, 1989, page 30, says: “Our intent was not to malign university education. . . . How much secular education one pursues is entirely a personal matter.”

THE NEW VIEW OF HIGHER EDUCATION (2005)

Several outlines for the talks at the Theocratic Ministry School and the Service Meeting after the year 2000 suggested that a new view of higher education was being considered. This view was presented in *The Watchtower* of October 1, 2005, and later, in the literature, in letters from the Watchtower Society, in talks by members of the GB, and meetings between the circuit overseers and the elders. For persons, including myself, who know what higher education really is, this view was very disappointing. Young Witnesses were now warned against all kinds of higher education, and the motives of those who chose higher education were questioned. However, the problem is that the basis for these warnings was, and is, questionable, and very often directly wrong. As I will show below, several references to different sources used to discredit higher education are taken out of their contexts.

THE EXTREME VIEWS OF TWO MEMBERS OF THE GOVERNING BODY

As I already have mentioned, elders should never influence others by their personal viewpoints in situations where the conscience of each one should decide. But this was exactly what G. Lösch did in his talk as zone overseer in Monza (north of Milan in Italy) on May 22, 2005. The same was done by D. H. Splane in a talk in the Netherlands in the same year. Lösch even went

so far that he asked those who studied at a college or university to immediately stop their studies. He even threatened them that they would be accountable to Jehovah for their choice. I have a video of the talk of Lösch in Italian with an English translation. An elder who has been in the fulltime service for many years, and who is fluent in Italian and English attended the talk, and he confirmed the English translation that we see below.

Whether you go to univeristy or not may be a reflection of your faith or lack of faith, and it may indicate how present the imminence of the presence of the great tribulation is in your mind. What is indubitable is that the time left is reduced, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 7. Despite all the alleged benefits that could derive from it, spending four years or more in a university, would that be the best way to spend the remaining time? If you are currently at a university, why don't you meditate in prayer on the possibility of dropping out and doing something better? However, for us who scrutinize the meaning of world events in the light of Bible prophecy, there are more worthy reasons for not putting a worldly career first in your lives. We could liken ourselves to someone who sees a building with a sign that reads, "This Company is running out of business." Would we apply for a job there? Of course not. And if we were working for such a company, we would wisely look for a job elsewhere. Well, on all the institutions of the world lies a sign reading 'imminent liquidation'. The end is near. Yes, the Bible assures us that the world is passing away. Therefore, we will be wise and not imitate those who are an integral part of it.

Now you have listened to the advice. What will you do now? Some advocate going to college by citing the example of some elder's children who are attending college or did so. We cannot and do not want to tell you what to do. You and your parents should make a decision. We are not the masters of your faith. However, the faithful and discreet slave has the responsibility to warn against spiritual dangers and to encourage putting Kingdom interests first. *So, the slave discourages from going to college for a long period of time.* I have oftentimes heard experiences of individuals who were about to complete their college programs, and who dropped out when they learned the truth. Some other baptized individuals have turned down scholarships. What will *you* do? Which decisions will you make? Will you refuse or not? *Will you get a university education or not? You will be accountable to Jehovah*

for this. We will like to praise those in the audience who dropped out of college when they accepted the truth, as we praise those, who after listening to this talk, will make the same decision. Maybe you still want to advocate the possibility of going to college. You may say, “You see, brother X went to college, and now he is serving in the congregation, and he is also a pioneer.” *True, he may have survived college, so to speak.* However, what follows is a true experience of a young man who suffered from a compulsive disorder, which made him wash his hands over and over again, even 100 times a day. This disorder discouraged him so much that one day, he decided to commit suicide. He bought a rifle, put it in his mouth, and pulled the trigger. The bullet, however, did not kill him but instead perforated the part of his brain that was responsible for his compulsive disorder. He survived, and after that, he managed to live a normal life. Yes, it is true, he survived, but would you recommend that other people imitate what the young man did? [Applause from the audience] *Similarly, some have survived college, but would you recommend that to others?* Instead of investing in higher education, it would be advisable to grow in the knowledge of Jehovah. In order to start knowing the Bible better, we must read the Bible every day. Every day! Shall we do it? (My italics.)

There are several points to criticize in this talk. Lösch says that he and the other members of the GB will not “tell you what to do,” because “we are not masters of your faith.” But this is exactly what Lösch does. His message is: If you attend college, drop out immediately. You “will be accountable to Jehovah” for your decision. This is very strong pressure from this member of the GB. Moreover, Lösch compares going to college with suicide by shooting oneself. A few survive such a suicide attempt, but you should not count on that. This indicates an extremist’s view by a person who does not know what he is talking about.

I would also like to add that the arguments regarding “the time left is reduced” and “the imminence of the presence of the great tribulation” are misleading. The words, “the time left is reduced” was directed to married persons in the first century CE, and they have nothing to do with the great tribulation. *The Watchtower* says:

To married Christians, the apostle Paul gives this counsel: “This I say, brothers, the time left is reduced. Henceforth let those who have wives be as though they had none.” (1 Corinthians 7:29) What does this entail? Well, the

followers of Jesus Christ are to ‘keep on seeking first the Kingdom.’ (Matthew 6:33) Therefore, married couples are not to be so absorbed in one another that they give Kingdom interests a secondary place in their lives.⁴

The argument saying that you cannot plan this or that because the time is reduced, was also used 60 years ago when I became a Witness. And today, it is 17 years since Lösch gave his talk. So, the time was not so reduced, as Lösch suggested. Those who attended college and did not drop out, have graduated from college a long time ago, and even if a person started on a three-year college education after the talk of Lösch, he or she has lived 14 years in the “reduced time” after his or her graduation.⁵

Since 1914, we have known that during this generation, the great tribulation will come. We have known that the great tribulation is coming closer and closer each year. But we do not know how close we are in a particular year. Therefore, arguments that you should not pursue higher education because the time is reduced (short), should never be used. A Swiss Witness, who had been in the full-time service for many years and whose life story was printed in *The Watchtower*, uttered some wise words.

4. *The Watchtower* of July 15, 2000, page 30.

5. I have also used the words, “the time is short,” in talks as a circuit and district overseer. But I have never asked the audience to stop with this or that because the time is short. As the district overseer from 1972 to 1974, I was the principal speaker at all the circuit assemblies in Norway, and my talks would naturally influence the view of the Witnesses regarding the year 1975. In 1966, when the book *Life Everlasting in the Freedom of the Sons of God* was published, there was a course for circuit servants at the branch office. When we discussed the book, I remember that the branch servant said that we should never say that Armageddon would come in 1975 or before that year, because we cannot know that. He pointed to some words on page 30 of the book: “It would not be by mere chance or accident but would be according to the loving purpose of Jehovah God for the reign of Jesus Christ, ‘the Lord of the Sabbath’ to run parallel with the seventh millennium of man’s existence.” The verb “would” shows that this is a possible but a hypothetical situation. I still have the notes for my talks, and the viewpoint that I presented in my talks was as follows: ‘We do not know when the end will come. But we are eager to see *if* the 6,000 years of man’s existence run parallel with the 6,000 years of Jehova’s day of rest! If we can free some time and do more in the preaching work, even become full-time preachers, while we are looking at the unfolding of world events down to 1975, that would be very fine. But we should not commit ourselves to the year 1975 or another year. But as we do today, we should have balanced plans for ourselves and our family that go beyond the year 1975, while we live normal lives and serve Jehova wholeheartedly.’

He said: “We should plan as if Armageddon would come in 50 years and live as if it would come tomorrow.”

Lösch also said that “the slave discourages from going to college for a long period of time.” This is, in reality, a violation of the Bible principles quoted above. No elder has the right to exercise pressure on a Witness as to the kind and length of his or her education. The irony of this is that a young person who wants to become a plumber, an electrician, or a carpenter also has to use a “long time” for his or her education. In Norway, a person who wants to become an electrician must spend fourteen and a half years before he gets his certificate, including the 10-year education required by law. The shortest university education to become a physiotherapist, or a social worker is 15 years, and the longest is 16 years. To become a nurse, 16 years of education is needed. The education required to become an electrician is not discouraged. So why should an education that is six or 18 months longer be discouraged, because the last part of this education is taken at a university? This is an extreme view that contradicts the Bible. And I will show below that there are no more dangers for a Christian who attends a university than it is for one who attends a vocational school, a trade school, or a technical school.

I would like to mention that many Witnesses in Italy were shocked by the talk of Lösch. And there were many discussions and negative comments after the talk.

The GB member D. H. Splane gave a talk as a zone overseer in the Netherlands and Belgium in 2005. He used David, Goliath, and Saul as illustrations indicating that each of us must also fight against giants. One of the “giants” we have to fight, according to Splane’s words, is economic problems. Based on Splane’s words, it was evident that some Witnesses had quoted the balanced *Watchtower* article on higher education of 1992. On this background, Splane said:⁶

Thousands of our brothers face the giant of economic problems. The world keeps them working long hours. Parents want the best for their children. Do we use Saul’s armor, or do we follow Jehovah’s way? The world says the answer is higher education. Some spend four, six, or even eight years pursuing *the world’s higher education. The result:*

6. The review was done by a Witness from the Netherlands.

They are effectively cut off from Jehovah's organization and congregation for that time period.

Back in 1992, Jehovah's organization published some direction. *The Watchtower* of 1 November 1992, had an interesting article on education. The point was that we should have a balanced view of education. Interestingly, the words "higher education" never once appeared in that article; it used the term "supplementary education." This means a short course of perhaps a few months or even a year, or maybe a little longer, in order to adequately take care of their needs. Do we see the wisdom of that counsel? *Today, millions of university graduates are without work.* In Paris, it is said that one cannot find a plumber. Yes, many have computer science degrees, but when the pipes burst, a computer science degree does not fix them! (My italics.)

Splane used the same tendentious language that we find in the literature regarding higher education, as I will show below. Please note the unfavorable expression "*the world's* higher education." (My italics.) Christians must not be a part of the world, so Splane's words indicate that higher education is not for Christians.

Splane said that the words "higher education" never once appeared in that article from 1992. This is wrong. In paragraph 18 on page 20, the article says:

This magazine has placed emphasis on the dangers of higher learning, and justifiably so, for much higher education opposes the "healthful teaching" of the Bible. (Titus 2:1; 1 Timothy 6:20, 21)

After these words, the article speaks of "supplementary education," and the context shows that this expression primarily refers to studies at a university or college.

The way Splane presented the results of higher education is both biased and misleading. As I will show below, it is absolutely wrong to claim that a Witness who pursues higher education is "*effectively cut off from Jehovah's organization and congregation*" for the time he or she attends university or college. This shows that what Splane says is hearsay and that he himself has no idea of what university studies are like.

While I studied Semitic languages at the University of Oslo from 1985 and received my doctoral degree in 2004, I was the presiding overseer in a

congregation of 120–140 publishers, was a very active member of the Hospital Liaison Committee in Oslo, and my average field service was more than three times higher than the congregation average. The reason for this high theocratic activity was that a student at a university has substantially more spare time than an artisan who works full time. I will show that in what follows.

When I studied Semitic languages, I had two lectures of 90 minutes each per week at the University for 14 weeks in the autumn and 16 weeks in the spring. When I studied Latin and Greek, I had four lectures per week of 90 minutes each. If we use the numbers of Latin and Greek, a student spends 180 hours at the University per year. This shows that even a student who follows all the lectures, only spends a few hours every week at the University for 30 weeks of a year, and then there are 22 weeks with no teaching. This schedule shows that most of the studies of a student are made at home or at a library at the time chosen by the student. And because the student can plan his or her time, there is absolutely no reason why his or her studies should jeopardize theocratic activities. For comparison, a Norwegian artisan spends 1,470 hours (35 hours per week for 42 weeks) per year in his or her secular work.⁷

To discourage higher education even more, Splane said that “Today, millions of university graduates are without work.” If we combine several countries, Splane’s words are true. But he did not tell that many more persons with only primary education or a high school education are without work in these countries. In the last 20 years, there have been several economic problems and high unemployment in Europe, and to a lesser degree in Scandinavia. What is absolutely certain is that persons with a good education have better chances of getting a job than uneducated persons when unemployment is high. So Splane’s words are misleading, indeed.

For example, persons in health care (nurses, doctors, etc.) will always get a job. The same is true with IT-engineers and technicians, economists, teachers in ordinary schools and high schools, civil engineers, and a significant number of other occupations based on university studies. True, those who only have studied philosophy and other highly theoretical subjects sometimes have difficulties in finding jobs. But I estimate that less

7. In the US, artisans use 35 to 40 or more hours per week, and have less vacation time than Norwegian artisans.

than 5% of the subjects taught at the University of Oslo and Høgskolen Kristiania (the College of Kristiania) only have a theoretical and no practical side. So the 50,000 students at these two institutions of higher learning have good chances of finding a job after their graduation. Later I will describe the situation of 25 Witnesses who pursued higher education while they were active members of the same congregation that I was in.

REASONS FOR NOT CHOOSING HIGHER EDUCATION (2005)

The Watchtower of October 1, 2005 expressed a spirit very different from the spirit in the article of 1992. The article from 1992 discussed the dangers of higher education but showed at the same time that there could be situations where it was wise to choose higher education and that no one should criticize such a decision. The article of 2005 spoke strongly against higher education, and regrettably, the reasons given were questionable and wrong. The following reasons were given in the article:

1) Higher education is pursued in order to become rich and influential (page 28, ¶9):

A New York Times Op-Ed article observes: “Higher education used to be regarded as an engine of opportunity. Now it’s certifying the gap between the haves and the have-lesses.” In other words, quality higher education is fast becoming the domain of the rich and influential, who put their children through it to ensure that they too become the rich and influential of this system. Should Christian parents choose such a goal for their children?

2) If one pursues higher education, one advances the present system (page 28, ¶10):

Even where higher education is free, there may be strings attached. For example, *The Wall Street Journal* reports that in one Southeast Asian country, the government runs a “pyramid-style school structure that unabashedly pushes the cream to the top.” “The top” ultimately means placement in the world’s elite institutions—Oxford and Cambridge in England, the Ivy League Schools in the United States, and others. Why does the government provide such a far-reaching program? “To fuel the national economy,” says the report. The education may be practically free, but the price that the students pay is a life engrossed in advancing the present system. Though such a way of life is highly sought-after in the world, is it what Christian parents want for their children?

3) The students experience time pressure (page 29, ¶12):

In addition to the bad environment, there is the pressure of schoolwork and examinations. Naturally, students need to study and do their homework to pass the exams. Some may also need to hold at least a part-time job while going to school. All of this takes a great deal of their time and energy. What, then, will be left for spiritual activities? When pressures mount, what will be let go? Will Kingdom interests still come first, or will they be put aside?

4) The students are exposed to a negative influence (page 30, ¶13):

Of course, immorality, bad behavior, and pressures are by no means limited to the college or university campus. However, many worldly youths view all such things merely as part of the education, and they think nothing of it. Should Christian parents knowingly expose their children to that kind of environment for four or perhaps more years?

5) University education has little value in connection with getting a good job (box, page 29):

In view of all this, more and more educators are seriously doubting the value of higher education today.

THE SOURCES HAVE BEEN TAKEN OUT OF CONTEXT

I have carefully studied the sources that have been used in the 2005 article, and none of these sources are treated fairly. This fact put the author of the article and those who have checked the article in a very bad light.

Reason number 1) misrepresents the source of the quotation. The author does not speak about the *goal* of higher education, that this goal is to “become rich and influential in this system.” He does not speak about *goals* but *opportunities*. He is discussing how to help more youngsters from families that are not so rich to get an education that can give them good jobs. He says that he hopes that the “crisis” in education would cause “changes in higher education that make it easier for teenagers who don’t come from affluence to get the education needed to compete for those jobs.”

The article speaks about colleges in the US, but the situation is different in Scandinavia and other countries. For example, the 30,000 students at the University of Oslo come from all levels of society, and I am sure that most students come from families that are not rich. Those who study to be kindergarten teachers, teachers in the primary school, nurses, librarians,

physiotherapists, engineers, IT-technicians, or pharmacists, in most cases, do not start their studies with a plan to become rich. What the members of the GB do not understand is that the mentioned occupations and four hundred other occupations do not make people rich; they are normal jobs, and the pay is on the same level, or even a little lower than the pay of a plumber or an electrician.

When ¶9 of *The Watchtower* article, based on the quotation, concludes that higher education is becoming something only for the rich and influential persons, this is absolutely not what the source article says. The article shows that rich parents spend much money to help their children get the best university courses, while this is more difficult for those who are poorer. University officials are discussing how this situation can be remedied. On this background, the question: “Should Christian parents present such a goal [to become rich and influential] for their children?” is based on a false premise, and the question is leading the readers astray. In reality, the question is manipulating the readers. This is so because the message of the paragraph in *The Watchtower* is: Persons pursue higher education in order to be rich and influential. To become rich and influential is wrong for Christians. Therefore, Christians cannot pursue higher education.

Reason number 2) again misrepresents the source. One country in Asia where education does not cost much money is referred to. The price for this free education, according to ¶10, is that the students must dedicate their lives to work for the present world order. I am quite sure that students in this country do not sign a contract binding them to a certain profession for the rest of their lives. But when they complete their studies, they can choose their occupation. This is the situation in Scandinavia and all countries in the free world. I estimate that much more than 90% of the more than four hundred different studies at the College of Oslo and the University of Oslo lead to normal jobs, such as those mentioned above. The graduates do not dedicate themselves to work for the present world order, any more than a plumber or an electrician does.

The conclusion of ¶10 is that the goal of higher education is to reach the top. But this is a generalization that, in many, or most cases, is not true. So, when the paragraph asks: “Though such a way of life [to reach the top and dedicate oneself to work for this world order] is highly sought-after in the world, is it what Christian parents want for their children?” this

premise is false as well, and the reader is again manipulated and led to have a negative view of higher education.

Reason number 3) may, in some cases, be partly true. In connection with exams, there is a need for extensive reading. But the pressure needs not to be higher than in high school or in a job as an artisan, where particular works have to be finished within a limited time. If the learning is spread throughout the whole year, there is no pressure at all.

What is misleading in connection with point 3) is the generalization that is made: Pressure in connection with the studies and with the exams, and the stress because of the need to have a part-time job is a part of the life of a student. Therefore, there is little time for spiritual activities. Above, I mentioned my own experience as a student. I used no more than 180 hours per year for attending lectures at the university, while an artisan may use 1,470 hours in his work.

I was a member of the Majorstua congregation in Oslo, Norway, for 35 years. The congregation has the University of Oslo in its territory, and throughout the years, many young Witnesses moved to our congregation to study at the University. During these 35 years, 25 members of the congregation have graduated from the University. All the 25 students, except one, regularly attended meetings and had a balanced preaching schedule. There were 16 males among the students, and as far as I know, all of them in the year 2019 served as elders in their congregations. Thus, the “pressure” of higher education need not intervene with a person’s balanced theocratic schedule.

Reason number 4) says that immorality and bad behavior are parts of universities and colleges and all kinds of environments. But then the article says that many students view this as a natural part of the life of a student. After this, the article again generalizes: The life of a student is like this! So, based on the generalization, the article asks why parents should expose their children to this bad influence for several years?

The premise for the question is untenable. First, students, indeed, view free sex as something natural, but that is true with most other worldly people as well. So, this influence at the university is not worse than elsewhere in the world. Second, it is not true that the students at the University of Oslo view lawlessness and bad behavior as a natural part of student life. I am quite sure that this is neither the case in other universities in Scandinavia. Third, a student need not socialize with other students if

he or she does not want to. The student can attend lectures and study at home with little contact with other students. Or he or she can skip all the lectures and study at home and via the Internet, without any contact with other students.

However, in one situation, the question in number 4) can be pertinent. That is if a student lives at the campus together with other students. But that is not necessary for a Witness student. Living at the campus, he or she may be exposed to negative influences. But those living outside the campus have less contact with fellow students than, for example, pupils in high school have with other classmates. Thus, when ¶13 asks: “Should Christian parents knowingly expose their children to that kind of environment [immorality and bad behavior] for four or perhaps more years?” the premise again is wrong. The reader gets one more reasons to look down on higher education.

Reason number 5) causes me to think of James 3:1 (NWT84): “Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, knowing that we shall receive heavier judgment.” The conclusion in the box on page 29 after four references are presented is: “*In view of all this, more and more educators are seriously doubting the value of higher education today.*” This conclusion is flawed, indeed. As already mentioned, I have read all the four articles referred to by *The Watchtower*, and the value of higher education is not doubted in any of them. On the contrary, the aim of the articles is to get higher education better and more targeted in connection with the needs for educated workers in the future.

The *Newsweek* article does not say that higher education is worthless. But it says that a college education at a less known college can give just as good jobs as education from an elite university. The article from *American Educator* says: “Encouraging students to attend college despite their poor academic preparation is a practice based in part on the premise that all decent jobs require a college education.” The article shows that “over 40% of high school seniors lack 9th-grade math skills and 60% lack 9th-grade reading skills.” So, it is better to acquire these skills than to start a college education without them. Decent jobs can be acquired by those having such skills is the conclusion. The author does not question the value of college education, but he shows that this education has little value for those who do not have 9th-grade skills.

The *Time* article discusses persons between 18 and 25, between adolescence and adulthood, and how they can get jobs based on their education. The article says that many colleges do not help their students get “ready for real-world jobs.” But it also points out that many colleges have started to remedy this situation. The article criticizes the quality of some college education, but it does not question the value of this education.

The article in *The Futurist* shows that schools are educating more people in particular fields than there are jobs in these fields. This is the background for the words: “We are educating people for the wrong futures.” The article does not cast doubt on the value of higher education, but it points out that there is a need to make this education more specialized in order to cover the needs of the employers in the future. So, there is absolutely no basis for the claim of *The Watchtower* that more and more educators have serious doubts about the value of higher education!

In all areas of modern society, there is a need for persons educated at higher institutions. A hospital needs nurses, x-ray specialists, and doctors; the police force needs police officers and lawyers; kindergartens need educators for small children; schools and high schools need teachers; commercial firms need lawyers, accountants, economists, IT-specialists, engineers, and persons who master different languages. In all areas of our society—in areas that do not contradict the Bible and its principles—there is a great need for persons with higher education. True, there is also a great need for artisans and workers with practical skills, but this need does not question the value of higher education. I am certain that no educator in Norway or Scandinavia has serious doubts, or even has minor doubts, about the value of higher education. But as the authors of the four articles discussing the American educational system did, I am sure that some Scandinavian educators have found weaknesses in the educational systems in Scandinavia as well. Weaknesses should be remedied, but weaknesses do not question the value of the very educational system.

We should also keep in mind that some of the observations of the quoted articles may fit the USA but not Scandinavia and other countries. It is not true for Scandinavia what the *American Educator* says, that it is enough to be able to read, write, and calculate on the level of the 9th grade to get a decent job. The 10-year education required by law in Norway will not help youngsters get a decent job. And even the standard high school

curriculum of three years without specialization will only give you a job as an unskilled worker, for example in an office, at a supermarket, or as a janitor. Because the unemployment rate has been very low in Norway, most persons has been able to get a job. But *Aftenposten*, the biggest Norwegian newspaper, recently wrote that unskilled workers are the losers. Because of the big changes among commercial firms and in society at large, they are the first to lose their jobs, and in the future, more and more unskilled workers in Norway will lose their jobs. When this is true in Norway, how much more is it true in, for example, southern Europe, where the unemployment rate is excessively high.

While this manuscript was being completed, the Coronavirus pandemic occurred. A great number of businesses in all countries experiencing the pandemic will be made bankrupt, and the employees will lose their jobs. When life again becomes relatively normal, who of the great numbers of unemployed persons will get jobs? First of all, well-educated persons and artisans with certificates. Persons who only have primary school or high school will have difficulties in finding jobs when there are many more unemployed persons than available jobs. So, a great number of Witnesses will pay a high price because of the extreme view of the GB regarding higher education.

How could the article in *The Watchtower* of 2005 about higher education be so completely wrong and misleading? An examiner at the exams of students at other universities than his own is trained both to evaluate what a student has written, and the background of what he or she has written. Because of my experience as an examiner, I have the following theory: The person who wrote the article was searching for evidence that higher education is bad. But he had never attended a college or a university himself, and he had no firsthand knowledge of college or university life. Therefore, when he found several “bad” things, he was delighted. But he was not able to evaluate the information in its real context. Because of this, he presented viewpoints that were misleading and false.

I would like to add that the writer of the 2005 Watchtower article could not even have participated in an elementary course, dealing with how to write articles, the ethics of writers, and how to handle sources correctly. So my view is that both the strong bias of the writer against higher education and his incompetence contributed to the bad result.

In 2011, there was a course for elders, and a part of the course discussed how bad higher education was. A letter of March 28, 2012 contained reminders from this course. Of the two-page letter, one and a quarter pages discussed higher education. The letter said,

To pursue higher education does not only lead to bad associations for the person, but the result is often that the faith in Jehovah God and the Bible is broken down. . . . Appointed brothers must be examples in connection with following of the counsel in connection with higher education given by the faithful and discreet slave and its governing body. Will an elder, a ministerial servant or a pioneer be qualified to continue to serve in his appointment if he, his wife, or his children pursue higher education? That depends on the circumstances and how others view him.

If an appointed person or his family pursues higher education, the body of elders must consider eight different questions. These questions include his motives, if he is a spiritual person, if he puts Kingdom interests first, and if he regularly attends meetings. These are natural questions that always will be asked in connection with the appointment of an elder, a ministerial servant, and a pioneer. But in addition, there are two questions that make it difficult for an appointed person to continue his service if he or his family study at a university.

- 1) Does he respect what the faithful and discreet slave has said regarding the dangers of higher education? (3 Joh. 9)
- 2) How does the congregation view him?

When the Watchtower literature from 2005 on and the course for elders in 2011 have painted such a bad picture of higher education, how could the elders view a person who pursued higher education as one who respected what the faithful and discreet slave had said about the dangers of higher education? Moreover, the elders would naturally convey to the congregation members the very negative view of higher education that they got from the literature and from the course. In view of this, how could the congregation view a person pursuing higher education as a good example? So, even though it was not explicitly said that an elder, ministerial servant, or a pioneer, or their families *could not* pursue higher education, that would be the logical conclusion of the counsel given by the GB.

The following happened in a European country in 2019: A brother had served as an elder for 19 years. He was very active in the Christian service, and he was a member of the Hospital Liaison Committee. He had also

studied at the University and had earned a doctoral degree. While he studied at the University, two different circuit overseers visited the congregation, and they cooperated in a fine way with this elder. A new circuit overseer visited the congregation of the elder in 2019, and one of the first things he did was to remove this brother from being an elder. He also instructed the other elders that the brother was not allowed to pray at the congregation meetings. And what was the sin of this brother? He had studied at the university and was not a good example for others.

This situation shows that in some instances, the body of elders accept that an elder pursues higher education. But in most instances, this is not the case.

THE MISUSE OF THE SOURCES CONTINUES

The Watchtower of October 15, 2013 discussed higher education. Several arguments are very unbalanced and lead the readers astray. Paragraph 13 on page 15 says:

Higher education, with its emphasis on academic study, often produces graduates who have few or no practical skills, leaving them unprepared to deal with the realities of life.

If we look at the subjects taught at colleges and universities in Scandinavia, we see that this statement is wrong. Most of the subjects taught have a practical side, and the students are just as prepared for, or even more prepared for the realities of life, compared with joiners, plumbers, and electricians. Who can rightly say that a nurse, a kindergarten teacher, a school teacher, an agronomist, an accountant, an engineer, a librarian, an IT-technician, an ergo-therapist, a midwife, an optician, a lawyer, a pedagogue, a doctor, a dentist, are not “prepared for the realities of life”? Paragraph 14 on page 16 in this article is particularly misleading. The paragraph says:

Consider the case of the apostle Paul. He was educated at the feet of the Jewish Law teacher Gamaliel. The education Paul received can be compared with that of a university education today. But how did Paul view this when compared with his privilege of slaving for God and Christ? He wrote: “I . . . consider all things to be loss on account of the excelling value of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.” Then he added: “On account of him I have taken the loss of all things and I consider them as a lot of refuse, that I may gain Christ.” (Phil. 3:8) That assessment helps young Christians and their

God-fearing parents to make a wise choice when it comes to education. (See pictures.)

In this paragraph, the Bible simply is misused. To compare Paul's education at Gamaliel's feet with modern university education is possible. But when the paragraph applies Paul's words in Philippians 3:8 to his higher education, and by implication, applies them to modern higher education, this is to take the words completely out of their context. If one takes "all things" in the expression "I . . . consider all things to be a loss" and applies these words to higher education, it must also be applied to tent-making, which was the occupation of Paul, and by implication, it must refer to modern artisans as well. But the GB would never apply it this way.

In verses 4 to 7 of Philippians, chapter 3, Paul speaks about his life as a zealous circumcised Jew who could, from the point of view of the law, be viewed as blameless. *This situation*, which previously was so valuable to him, he now viewed as a lot of refuse because of his knowledge of Christ. His words have absolutely nothing to do with higher education. But I am certain that what Paul learned from Gamaliel (his higher education) was a great help for him in his preaching work because he had learned to know the Scriptures and how the religious leaders of his day were thinking. To use Paul's words in Philippians 3:8 to warn against higher education is again a manipulation of the reader.

At the end of the paragraph, there is a reference to the pictures on page 15. This is an example of a trend that we see in much of the discussions of higher education and references to higher education in our literature from 2005 on. The drawings present higher education as the very opposite of a balanced Christian life, and the motives of one who pursues higher education are questioned. But the truth is that higher education can be an advantage for a Christian in connection with his or her life and service, as the article from November 1, 1992 also shows.

DISCREDITING PERSONS WHO PURSUE HIGHER EDUCATION

The articles in *The Watchtower* of November 1, 1992 and *Awake!* of March 8, 1998 encourage young Witnesses to make plans for full-time service. However, they also show that no one should criticize persons who choose higher education. On many occasions since 2005, the motives of those

choosing higher education have been questioned. A letter from the Norwegian branch office of December 7, 2006 to all elders says:

A college education or a university education does not help us to promote the interests of the Kingdom. No, instead one will be absorbed in promoting one's own interests. (Matt 6:33)

According to this statement, there is no exception: to seek higher education is a selfish endeavor. Any all-proposition is dangerous, and the words of the author of this letter regarding higher education reveal a strong bias. This is in reality, name-calling, setting a stamp of selfishness on all who pursue higher education.

There is also a questioning of motives in several discussions in *The Watchtower* and other literature after 2005, as shown below.

The Watchtower of April 15, 2008, pages 3–7, ¶9, 10:

⁹ Another example of something useful that can become a valueless thing is secular education. We want our children to be well-educated so that they can make their way in life. Even more important, a well-educated Christian is better able to read the Bible with understanding, reason on problems and come to sound conclusions, and teach Bible truths in a clear and persuasive way. Getting a good education takes time, but it is time well spent.

¹⁰ What, though, of higher education, received in a college or a university? This is widely viewed as vital to success. *Yet, many who pursue such education end up with their minds filled with harmful propaganda. Such education wastes valuable youthful years that could best be used in Jehovah's service.* (Eccl. 12:1) Perhaps it is not surprising that in lands where many have received such an education, belief in God is at an all-time low. *Rather than looking to the advanced educational systems of this world for security, a Christian trusts in Jehovah.*—Prov. 3:5. (My italics.)

Again we see a very unbalanced author. The definition of the word “propaganda” is:

Ideas, facts, or allegations spread deliberately to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause (Merriam-Webster).

In order to spread propaganda, one must have an agenda. But I can hardly see any agenda in the teachings at the University of Oslo. Evolution contradicts the Bible and Christian beliefs, and most students and teachers believe that organic evolution has occurred. But there are very few study modules at the University of Oslo where evolution is a part of the curriculum. The ethic scheme for authors suggests that when a characteristic of a system or an institution is given, this characteristic

should fit a great part of the system or institution, and not only be an exception. Universities do not spread harmful propaganda! And if organic evolution is viewed as such, it is only a very small fraction of what the universities teach.

On the other hand, the teaching of the GB regarding higher education excellently fits the definition of propaganda, as given above. The articles in *The Watchtower* of 2005 and 2013 that I have discussed contain several allegations that are taken out of context. And these allegations have an agenda: to show that there are great problems and dangers with higher education (to further one's cause) and to show that those who defend higher education are wrong (to damage an opposing cause).

Another allegation is that “*Such education wastes valuable youthful years that could best be used in Jehovah’s service.*” The words “such education” refers to higher education. But would the author say that the fourteen and a half years that is required to get a certificate as an electrician also “waste valuable youthful years”? I have never seen that the literature of the Watchtower Society criticizes the long education of artisans.

The technique used here is to set higher education in contrast with “Jehovah’s service.” I quit my engineer studies and started as a pioneer six months after my baptism, and I continued in the full-time service for 15 years. And when I speak with young Witnesses, I encourage them to consider full-time service. However, if we look at the situation, most of the young Witnesses do not become pioneers when they are teenagers or are in their early twenties. But they spend some years at a vocational school, a trade school, or technical school to learn a trade or a profession so that they can care for themselves and a future family. It is very wrong to criticize the choice of these persons and set their choice in contrast with using the “valuable youthful years in Jehovah’s service.” Some young ones pursue higher education, and it is also wrong to set this education in contrast with “Jehovah’s service.”

Teenagers and young persons are different in connection with their physical and psychical strength and maturity. Therefore, if a person decides to use his or her “valuable youthful years” to learn a trade or a profession, including higher education, to become a nurse or a school teacher, they should not be criticized. They can serve Jehovah wholeheartedly while they take their education.

The last two clauses are also biased, and we read:

Rather than looking to the advanced educational systems of this world for security, a Christian trusts in Jehovah.

Again, the same technique is used: To pursue higher education is to seek security in this world, and those who do that do not trust in Jehovah. This simply is nonsense! A Witness who studies at a college to become a librarian, and IT-technician, and optician, or an accountant does not lack faith in Jehovah, as the quotation implies, any more than a plumber, a welder, an electrician, a carpenter, or a tailor. These occupations based on a university study are normal professions that do not give higher pay or higher security than the non-university occupations.

Inside the frame below are two examples from the Majorstua congregation in Oslo showing that youngsters are not “wasting valuable youthful years” by pursuing higher education.

A young sister had grown up in a Witness family, and her parents had encouraged her to become a pioneer after high school. She had a positive view of the Christian service, but when she finished high school at the age of 18, she did not feel that she was mature enough to start pioneering immediately. Instead, she planned for the fulltime service at a later time, and she started a three-year university study to become a nurse. Her thought was that having a certificate as a nurse would give her a job anywhere in the country. While she studied, she attended the meetings regularly, commented at the meetings, and had a good service record. After she graduated as a nurse, she married, and she and her husband moved to a place where the need was great. She got a job immediately, but he, whose job was repairing engines, had to wait six months before he got a job. Later, this couple served in a foreign country where the need is great. To say that this young Sister only considered her own interests and wasted valuable youthful years and that her education did not help her to serve Jehovah better is absolutely wrong. If she had started pioneering at 18, when she felt she could not manage this service, a negative outcome could have been the result.

A young married sister was pioneering. One day when she and I worked together in the service, she said that she considered stopping pioneering in order to study at the University to become a nurse. The reason was the health of her husband, which was deteriorating. She had no special skills, and she realized that she would become the bread-

winner for the family. Therefore, she needed to have some skills. I said that this was a matter of conscience, so I could not give her any advice as to what she should do, except seeking the guidance of Jehovah. She started her studies, and before she graduated after three years, her husband was so ill that he was in bed 24 hours a day. She was paid for nursing him two hours a day, and for five hours, she worked at a hospital. Can we say that her decision to stop pioneering and acquire higher education was for her own selfish interests? Was she wasting valuable youthful years? Absolutely not! She could, of course, have continued as a pioneer until her husband became very ill, and after that, earned money as an unskilled worker. But would that have been better from a Biblical point of view? It is now 20 years since she graduated, and if we look back all these years, her investment of time in her education and the time she has used as a nurse, have given her more spare time than if she had not taken her education and worked as an unskilled worker.

Below are four more examples where the motives of those pursuing higher education are questioned:

God's Word for Us Through Jeremiah (2010), page 45, ¶7:

A Christian might mistakenly think that his heart could never deceive him, as happened to many in Jeremiah's day. For example, a man might reason, 'I have to hold down a job to support my family,' which is understandable. What if that led him to think, 'I need more education to secure or hold a decent job'? That too might seem logical, leading him to conclude, 'Times have changed, and to survive today you need to get a college or university education to hold on to your job.' *How easily one might start to minimize the wise, balanced advice from the faithful and discreet slave class about additional education and start to miss meetings!* In this area, some have gradually been molded by the world's reasonings and views. (Eph. 2:2, 3) The Bible aptly warns us: "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould."—Rom. 12:2, *Phillips*.

The whole discussion above shows that the advice from the GB is very far from being balanced, as the book claims. Most references are taken out of context, and a caricature is given of different sides of higher education. In the quotation above, we again see a misleading contrast. The advice from the GB is that no brother or sister should pursue higher education,

at least not to earn an MA or MS degree. If you do not follow this advice, “*you start to miss meetings.*”

As I have shown above, students have much more spare time than full-time workers. Therefore, there is no reason why pursuing higher education should cause anyone to miss meetings. But if a college student misses meetings, there may be another reason that is not based on lack of time. It may be the extreme view of the GB on higher education that causes congregation members to freeze the student out. He or she simply does not feel welcome in the congregation. A friend of mine in the US, who is an elder, wrote:

Returning to the internal social pressures of the congregation, my concern is that, to some extent, the picture painted of higher education in the organization is a caricature, and on this basis, many members of the congregation have a biased view. I have not experienced that myself, but I can imagine, as you say, that some college students do not feel well at the meetings because of this bias, and therefore, they stay away from meetings.

I have, over the years, received many signals from elders in Norway and abroad regarding higher education. And these signals have shown the strong bias of these elders, which are based on the writings of the GB. This fits very well with the viewpoint quoted above. I have mentioned 25 young Witnesses in the Majorstua congregation in Oslo, who, during 35 years, graduated from the University of Oslo. All of them, except one, attended meetings regularly, because they felt at home in the congregation in the same way as the other members.

The Watchtower of June 15, 2011, pages 29–32, says:

A Christian has a Scriptural obligation to care for his family, and that includes providing for their material needs. (1 Tim. 5:8) Still, does this really require a college or a university degree? *It would be good to consider what effect pursuing higher education could have on one’s relationship with Jehovah.* Let us illustrate this by considering a Scriptural example.

Baruch was the secretary to the prophet Jeremiah. At one point, rather than focusing on the privileges he had in serving Jehovah, *Baruch became ambitious.* Jehovah noticed this and through Jeremiah warned him: “*You keep seeking great things for yourself. Do not keep on seeking.*”—Jer. 45:5.

What were the “great things” that Baruch kept seeking? He may have been tempted to make a name for himself in the Jewish system of things. Or the great things could have been material prosperity. In any case, he had lost sight of the more important things, those having spiritual value. (Phil. 1:10) Yet,

Baruch obviously listened to Jehovah's warning through Jeremiah and thus gained his soul as a spoil.—Jer. 43:6.

What can we draw from this account? The counsel Baruch received indicates that something was amiss. He was seeking great things for himself. *If you have a means of supporting yourself, do you really need to spend time, money, and effort on further education just to realize personal aspirations or those of your parents or other relatives?* (By italics.)

Why should one's relationship with Jehovah be brought into the picture in connection with higher education? It is not mentioned in connection with an education based on vocational schools, trade schools, and technical schools, even though the length of time used before one gets his or her certificate as a qualified worker is equal to, or not much shorter than the time used for a college education?

The answer is that the members of the GB view those who pursue higher education to be ambitious, just as Baruch, who sought great things for himself. And students at colleges and universities have wrong aspirations. This means that the GB is saying that one who studies to become a nurse, a school-teacher, or a librarian has wrong aspirations and seeks great things for himself or herself. But the truth is, as I have said several times, that these are normal professions that do not include any fame or give a big salary. The viewpoint of the members of the GB shows that they do not have any firsthand knowledge of what higher education is and that they are biased in this area.

I will look at education in Norway. Going to school for ten years is required. Normally a child begins to attend school when he or she is six years old. This means that this primary education ends when the person is 15 years old. After primary education, the high school takes three years, and the person then is 18 years old. It is not easy to find a decent job in Norway for a person who only has high school. To get a profession, a university study is possible. To get a certificate as a physiotherapist, social worker, a radiographer, a speech therapist, and scores of other professions, a two- or three-year study at the university is necessary.⁸ This means that

8. In the USA, the primary schooling is nine years, high school is three years, and to earn an MA or MS, four more years are required. In Norway, the primary schooling is ten years, high school is three years, and to earn an MA or MS, three more years are required.

higher education is completed at the age of 20 or 21. To become a nurse or a lawyer, a three-year study is necessary.

We may compare university studies with the education needed to become an electrician. One who wants to become an electrician does not need to study at a university. But he or she is educated at a vocational school. Before a person gets the certificate as an electrician ten years in the primary school and four and a half years of further education is necessary. This means that the education to become an electrician is only six months shorter than the two-year university studies and one and a half years shorter than the three-year university studies. And interestingly, the salary of an electrician is higher than the salary of a physiotherapist, a social worker, a radiographer, a speech therapist, or a nurse. So why should we say that those who get a profession by a university study are seeking great things for themselves, but an electrician or other artisans is not seeking great things?

The Watchtower of November 15, 2011, page 19, ¶11, says:

Vigilant Christians refrain from using the world to the full with regard to higher education. *Many people in this world consider higher education an indispensable stepping-stone to prestige and an affluent life.* But we Christians live as temporary residents and pursue different goals. *We avoid “minding lofty things.”* (Rom. 12:16; Jer. 45:5) Since we are Jesus’ followers, we heed his warning: “Keep your eyes open and guard against every sort of covetousness, because even when a person has an abundance his life does not result from the things he possesses.” (Luke 12:15) *Consequently, young Christians are encouraged to pursue spiritual goals, getting only as much education as is required to meet their basic needs while focusing on preparing themselves to serve Jehovah ‘with their whole heart, soul, strength, and mind.’* (Luke 10:27) By doing so, they can become “rich toward God.”—Luke 12:21; read Matthew 6:19–21. (My italics.)

In this text, we again find the negative view that pursuing higher education is the same as “*minding lofty things.*” In contrast, the advice is “*getting only as much education as is required to meet their basic needs.*” But this contrast may be false. The article about higher education in *The Watchtower* of 1 November 1992, page 17, ¶9, says:

Reports received from branches of the Watchtower Society in different parts of the world indicate that in many places it is difficult to find jobs after completing simply the minimum schooling required by law or in some countries even after finishing secondary or high school.

These words were written 30 years ago, and the unemployment in Europe and the requirements to get a job is much higher now than 30 years ago. Some young persons think that in their circumstances, they can serve Jehovah best by being full-time ministers, and this standpoint is praiseworthy. Other young persons think that in their circumstances, the best way for them to serve Jehovah is to plan with the view of having their own family. The numbers show that there are many more young persons who do not choose full-time service than those who do. We cannot criticize these young persons because our physical and psychical strength is different, and our personal circumstances are different. A young person may even realize that in time, he has to care for his sick parents because the economic situation in his country is bad.

So how should a person who has completed high school think if he or she puts spiritual interests first? He could try to find a job as an unskilled worker in a supermarket or work as a janitor. If he found such a job, his salary would cover his basic needs of food and shelter. But this is for the time being, and a wise person will also plan for the future. If he gets a wife and children, will he be able to care for the family? And if he gets a family, and one of his children, because of illness, requires expensive special care, will he be able to pay for that? Both he and his family may need to do something different when they have a vacation. That will cost money. And what about attending an international assembly of JW? To travel to a foreign country is very expensive. But because the GB invites Witnesses from many countries to attend such assemblies, the members of the GB must think that to pay a lot of money for attending an international assembly is included in the phrase “*to meet their basic needs.*”

If a person after high school studies two or three years at a university to get a degree, that can be a kind of “insurance” for him. He will get a job much easier than an unskilled person, and also when unemployment is high, and he will get a reasonable salary. So, in our society, it seems to be clear that either to get a certificate as an artisan or to get a university education that qualifies him for a job as a social worker, a physiotherapist, or a radiographer is the same as “*caring for their basic needs.*”

The Watchtower of September 15, 2012, page 22, says:

Something that interferes with our manifesting godly patience is a wait-and-see attitude. What does that mean? *Well, a person who lacks confidence that the end is near might start to make alternate arrangements, so to speak,* in case things do not

work out as Jehovah said they would. In other words, he might be thinking, 'I will wait and see if Jehovah really is true to his word.' (My italics.)

He might then try to make a name for himself in this world, to seek financial security instead of putting God's kingdom first, *or to trust in higher education to secure a comfortable life now. Really, though, would that not be evidence of a lack of faith?* (My italics.)

The claim in this quotation is that pursuing higher education shows a lack of faith because this is a material goal and not a spiritual one. As I have shown above, this reasoning is completely wrong.

The crusade against higher education is still continuing. In *The Watchtower* of August 2021 (Study edition), page 14, we read:

Parents, endeavor to know what your children are being taught in school. What if you find out that some of the teachings include philosophies that contradict the Bible? Use our publications to help your children reason on convincing evidence. Also, beware of exposing your children to universities, where belief in God is scorned by many.

Both in primary school and in high school, organic evolution is taught, and most teachers do not believe in God. Therefore, it is a wise course that parents read the books that their children use at school and that they discuss with their children the parts of these books that contradict the Bible. It is also fine that they help their children to build up their faith in God but using the publications published by the Watchtower Society that discuss creation and evolution.

However, while most university teachers do not believe in God, there are very few curriculums at a university where organic evolution is taught. Moreover, as I have shown above, a student at a university can have minimal contact with fellow students and teachers. Therefore, warning against university education because many teachers and students do not believe in God is a silly argument. But this is a part of the extreme view that the members of the GB have regarding higher education.

All the quotations above directly or indirectly question the motives of Christians who have chosen higher education:

- 1) By pursuing higher education, one will be absorbed in promoting one's own interests.
- 2) One is wasting valuable youthful years.

- 3) One trusts in educational systems for security, and does not trust in Jehovah.
- 4) One will miss meetings.
- 5) Persons are seeking great things for themselves, are ambitious to realize personal aspirations.
- 6) One uses higher education as a stepping-stone to prestige and an affluent life.
- 7) One is “minding lofty things.”
- 8) One trusts in higher education to secure a comfortable life now, and does not trust in Jehovah.
- 9) One shows a lack of faith.

The talks by the GB members Lösch and Splane and the quotations and references from the literature that I have presented above, paint a caricature of higher education, and unjustly discredit those who chose to study at a university or college. Moreover, they place a huge burden on the shoulders of young Witnesses. Young brothers and sisters who would like a profession that requires a university study are placed under intense pressure not to do that. This is a clear violation of the Bible principles that I have quoted above.

Also, to ascribe wrong motives to youngsters who pursue a university education is simply unchristian. Could anyone rightly claim that a young sister who plans to use three years at the university after three years in high school to become a nurse is ambitious like Baruch and is seeking lofty things, but a young brother who pursues four and a half years of education to become an electrician is not ambitious? And could anyone rightly claim that the sister’s university environment is dangerous for her faith, but the vocational school of the brother and the environment of the practical side of his education are not dangerous? From my own experience of 25 years of studying and teaching at the University of Oslo, I will definitely say that university education is not more dangerous for a servant of Jehovah than education at a vocational school, a trade school, or a technical school.

EDUCATION AND OUR CONSCIENCE

Since 2005, the GB has exerted strong pressure on young Witnesses not to pursue higher education. It has been stated that a college or university education does not help a person to serve the interests of the Kingdom,

but this education causes a person to be absorbed in things that only serve his or her own interests. In contrast to this, *Awake!* of March 8, 1998, page 21, says regarding the kind of education that a person would choose:

At any rate, such decisions are of a personal nature. Christians ought not to criticize or judge one another on this matter. James wrote: “Who are you to be judging your neighbor?” (James 4:12) If a Christian is considering pursuing additional schooling, he would do well to examine *his own* motives to make sure that selfish, materialistic interests are not the driving force.

In contrast with the bad motives that are ascribed to those who pursue higher education in a number of articles, the last clause of the *Awake!* article shows that the choice to take more education after high school can be built on just motives. The view expressed in this *Awake!* article of 1998 and in the articles in *The Watchtower* of 1992 is the very opposite of the view expressed in *The Watchtower* of 2005, in different recent pieces of literature, in speeches by members of the GB, and in the letter from the Watchtower Society to all bodies of elders in 2006, and in *The Watchtower* (study edition) of 2021.

The issue I want to bring up is this: The choice of higher education or not, is it a matter of conscience, or is it a matter that others outside our family can decide for us? The Bible does not say anything about what kind of education a Christian should take, nor the length of this education, so it must be a matter of conscience.

The way the GB has presented higher education is a caricature of what it really is. There is no more immorality, wrongdoing, and drugs at colleges and universities in Scandinavia compared with vocational schools, technical schools, trade schools, and workplaces. Most curriculums do not contain organic evolution or information that breaks down the faith, and standard studies will consume much less time than a full-time job. To become an optician, a nurse, an IT-technician, or a teacher is not to seek great things for oneself; it is not a way to become rich or to make a worldly career. These are normal jobs that give a decent salary. Therefore, it is a clear violation of Bible principles when the GB exerts strong pressure on the Witnesses not to pursue higher education.

In *The Watchtower* magazines published in the 20th century, I have never seen anything like the propaganda against higher education that has been presented in *The Watchtower* magazines in the 21st century that I have discussed above. Now my beloved *Watchtower* has been polluted! The

extreme view of higher education of the members of the GB has caused harm and loss for tens of thousands of young Witnesses. Therefore, there is a strong burden of responsibility that rests on the shoulders of these members of the GB.

The crusade against higher education is a violation of Bible principles and should stop immediately. No elder has the right to influence or pressure others to follow his personal viewpoints regarding education or other issues.

THE DISFELLOWSHIPPING OFFENSES

—REVIEW—

In the book for elders, “*Shepherd The Flock Of God*”, there are listed 46 different disfellowshipping offenses, and two other disfellowshipping offenses are found elsewhere. Of these 48, 37 are made up and invented by the Governing Body without any basis in the Bible, and only 11 disfellowshipping offenses are based on the Bible. All these disfellowshipping offenses will be presented in this chapter.

The identification of the 11 disfellowshipping offenses that are based on the Bible

Seven different disfellowshipping offenses are presented in 1 Corinthians chapter 6. In chapters 5 and 6, the following criteria for disfellowshipping offenses are found:

- 1) A person or action is said to be “wicked”.
- 2) A person performing an action is said to be ‘handed over to Satan’.
- 3) Christians are admonished to avoid a person doing a certain action (This is not the situation when someone is “marked” as described at 2 Thessalonians 3:14).

The 37 disfellowshipping offenses that are not based on the Bible

A list of all the disfellowshipping offenses that are made up and invented by the GB is presented.

The addition of new disfellowshipping offenses means that Christian freedom was sacrificed for the sake of authoritarianism

The leaders of JW cherished Christian freedom for three decades after World War II. The conscience of each Christian had to decide employment and other activities. In the last part of the 20th century, however, the leaders of JW decided that some forms of employment and some activities were disfellowshipping offenses. Examples of gambling and the use of tobacco are discussed.

Disassociation — a false disclaimer

Among the 37 disfellowshipping offenses are four that are termed as “disassociation,” namely, 1) leaving JW, 2) accepting a blood transfusion, 3) joining another religious organization, and 4) violating one’s neutrality. For 40 years, persons who accepted a blood transfusion, joined another religious organization, and whose employment violated one’s neutrality were disfellowshipped. But then these actions were redefined as “disassociation” — the person had voluntarily left the congregation

because he no longer desired to be one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. This is a false disclaimer. If the persons had left JW of their own free will, the GB could not be accused of exerting pressure on anyone to not accept a blood transfusion or not to vote in a political election.

The Governing Body’s abuse of Greek words

We have seen how new disfellowshipping offenses related to employment and other activities were introduced. We have also seen how four of the disfellowshipping offenses have received a new name — disassociation — ostensibly absolving the GB of any responsibility for these actions. In this section, we will see how the GB has introduced new disfellowshipping offenses by twisting Greek words into new tailor-made definitions for their own purposes — to justify their new disfellowshipping offenses — but that have no linguistic basis.

The arbitrariness of the disfellowshipping laws

The GB’s definitions of what particular disfellowshipping laws include have changed. This means that a Witness at one time would be disfellowshipped for a particular action, but at another time the Witness would not have been disfellowshipped for that action. Some examples of changed definitions are:

- What is included in “abhorrent forms of pornography.”
- What is included in *porneia* (“sexually immoral intercourse”); the definitions have been changed eight times.
- Wrong sexual actions between married couples.
- Which kinds of gambling that are considered disfellowshipping offenses; the definitions have changed nine times.

The 100+ potential disfellowshipping offenses

The book *Aid to Answering Branch Office Correspondence* has about 150 entries, and each entry may include several decisions of non-biblical (mundane) issues. If a Witness does not accept one of these decisions of the GB, he or she will be disfellowshipped. An example where one decision ruined the life and marriage of a person who had changed gender is described in detail.

To expel or disfellowship someone from the Christian congregation is a serious action. And those who make the decision bear a great responsibility. What is important from the Christian point of view is that each disfellowshipping offense must have a solid basis in the Bible.

But in most instances, this is not the case. Of the 46 disfellowshipping offenses that are listed in the *Shepherd* book, only 11 have a basis in the Bible, and the other 35 are made up and invented by the Governing Body. There are also two other disfellowshipping offenses that are not mentioned in the *Shepherd* book that are not based on the Bible.

The lack of faithfulness toward the Bible is also seen by the fact that the members of the GB have added meanings to some of the Greek words that inherently come with a disfellowshipping offense attached, but that have no linguistic basis. I start this chapter by discussing how the disfellowshipping offenses can be identified in the Bible.

THE IDENTIFICATION OF THE 11 DISFELLOWSHIPPING OFFENSES

The only place in the Christian Greek Scriptures where disfellowshipping from the Christian congregation is directly mentioned is in 1 Corinthians, chapters 5 and 6, and in 2 Corinthians, chapter 2. The following criteria for disfellowshipping offenses are found in 1 Corinthians, chapter 5:

- 1) ***Being Wicked.*** 1 Corinthians 5:13 says that disfellowshipped persons are wicked, and this means that the wicked actions being practiced must be disfellowshipping offenses.
- 2) ***To be handed over to Satan.*** This is the expression describing disfellowshipping actions in 1 Corinthians 5:4. So when we read in the Christian Greek Scriptures that someone is handed over to Satan, we know that the person is guilty of practicing a disfellowshipping offense.
- 3) ***To avoid a person.*** Christians should “stop keeping company” with disfellowshipped persons, but not shunning them. In a different situation, 2 Thessalonians 3:14 shows that we should also “stop keeping company” with members of the congregations who have been “marked” for not accepting all the words written by Paul. Yes, these should be marked but not disfellowshipped. Therefore, if a text in the Christian Greek Scriptures says that we should “stop keeping company with someone” whose sin is not of the kind that calls for being marked, we know that the sin in question is a disfellowshipping offense.

In what follows, I will apply the aforementioned criteria to the text of the Christian Greek Scriptures, in order to determine how many of the disfellowshipping offenses listed in the *Shepherd* book have a basis in the Word of God.

In 1 Corinthians, chapter 6, there are nine nouns and one substantivized adjective (i.e., it *functions* as a verbal noun and a *nomen agentis* or agent noun)

that refer to disfellowshipping offenses. Three of these can be subsumed under other disfellowshipping offenses, and therefore, there are only seven different actions that explicitly are said to be disfellowshipping offenses in chapter 6. In what follows, I will apply the criteria mentioned above to four other actions, mentioned elsewhere in the Scriptures, and this shows that there are 11 disfellowshipping actions that are mentioned in the Bible.

AVOIDING A PERSON (*PARAITEOMAI*)

One of the four passages in the NT speaking about disfellowshipping offenses in addition to 1 Corinthians chapters 5 and 6 is found in Titus 3:10, 11 (NWT13):

¹⁰ As for a man who promotes a sect (*heretikos*), reject (*paraiteomai*) him after a first and a second admonition, ¹¹ knowing that such a man has deviated from the way and is sinning and is self-condemned.

We first need to consider the word “reject.” It is translated from the Greek word *paraiteomai*, which, according to Louw and Nida means, “purposely to avoid association with someone” As mentioned, there are two situations in the Christian congregations when someone can be avoided. One situation involves a “marked” person who, to some extent, has deviated from the Christian teachings, but can still be helped. (2 Thessalonians 3:14). The second situation is when a person has become wicked and has been disfellowshipped. (1 Corinthians 5:11) The person mentioned in Titus 3:10 could not be helped, and therefore must be disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation.

What is the sin of the mentioned man? The important word is the substantivized adjective *hairesitikos*. Louw and Nida define the word as “one who causes divisions,” and TDNT I, 184, says: “In Christianity, it seems to have been used technically from the very first, and denotes the adherent of heresy.” Titus 3:11 shows, as does 1 Corinthians chapters 5 and 6, that Paul is not speaking of just one or a few bad actions, but of being *hairesitikos* (“heretical”) — the man has become ‘a heretic,’ which speaks to the very personality of the person. The expression “have deviated from the way” is translated from *ekstrefomai*, which, according to Louw and Nida has the

meaning “to have departed from the patterns of correct behavior and thus to have become corrupt.”¹

Hymenaeus and Alexander were “also handed over to Satan,” thus being disfellowshipped. (1 Timothy 1:20) What was the reason for their disfellowshipping? They were “saying that the resurrection has already occurred, and they are subverting the faith of some.” (2 Timothy 2:17, 18.) Because they subverted the faith of some, we may say that they were sect-promoters. However, one of the seven definitions of apostasy in the book for elders is “Deliberately spreading teachings contrary to Bible Truth.” These words can be applied to Hymenaeus and Alexander, and in that case, we have two biblical disfellowshipping offenses, “promoting a sect” and “spreading false teachings.”

It is important to note that the man’s actions of promoting a sect *are* identical with his personality because it is shown that he *has become* corrupt. The words of 2 Thessalonians 3:14, 15 (NWT13) corroborate this:

¹⁴ But if anyone is not obedient to our word through this letter, keep this one marked and stop associating (*synanamignymi*) with him, so that he may become ashamed. ¹⁵ And yet do not consider him as an enemy, but continue admonishing him as a brother.

If a Christian had reservations regarding something in the inspired letter of Paul, such defiance could, to some extent, cause divisions. The fact that fellow congregation members could identify the noncompliant one shows that his ‘disobedience’ must be manifest in some form of divisive action. But because his wrong action is described by a verb and not by a noun or a substantivized adjective, his reservations evidently were not an ingrained part of the personality of the man. Therefore, he was not disfellowshipped like the promoter of a sect. He was still viewed as a brother. But he was reprovved, and he had to change his attitude.

One of the works of the flesh in Galatians 5 is expressed by the word *hairesis* (“sect”). Of the 15 works of the flesh listed there, this is one of four that constitute a disfellowshipping offense. (The other three are sexually immoral intercourse (*porneia*), idolatry (*eidololatria*), and drunkenness (*methyō*).

1. The antichrists (2 John 1:7, 11), who deliberately spread religious deception about Jesus Christ and his teachings, are also sect-promoters.

There is one other passage in the Christian Greek Scriptures that deals with the same subject as Titus 3:10, 11, and that is Romans 16:17, 18 (NWT84)

¹⁷ Now I exhort you, brothers, to keep your eye on those who cause divisions and occasions for stumbling contrary to the teaching that you have learned, and avoid (*ekklinō*) them. ¹⁸ For men of that sort are slaves, not of our Lord Christ, but of their own bellies; and by smooth talk and complimentary speech they seduce the hearts of guileless ones.

According to Louw and Nida, the word *ekklinō* in Romans 16:17 has the meaning: “Purposedly to avoid association with someone.” What are the sins of those mentioned in Romans 16:17?

- 1) Causing divisions.
- 2) Causing stumbling.
- 3) Acting contrary to Christian teaching.
- 4) Are not slaves of Jesus Christ.
- 5) Seducing the heart of guileless ones.

The last three points are the important ones. By acting against the Christian teaching and by seducing people, they were sect-promoters. They could not be helped anymore, and therefore the Greek word *ekklinō* (“avoid”) indicates that they must be disfellowshipped.

A very fine admonition is found in *The Watchtower* of August 1, 1974, page 472:

Holding to the Scriptures, neither minimizing what they say nor reading into them something they do not say, will enable us to keep a balanced view toward disfellowshipped ones.

This admonition often is not followed when Romans 16:17, 18 is discussed. The first article discussing disfellowshipping in detail was published in *The Watchtower* of March 1, 1952. In addition to the disfellowshipping offenses mentioned in 1 Corinthians, chapters 5 and 6, Romans 16:17, 18 are mentioned as evidence. The same scripture is also used in the *Shepherd* book chapter 12, point 39.4, for the disfellowshipping offense “causing divisions,” which is subsumed under the heading “Apostasy.”

The instruction is that a brother or sister who is accused of an action that can lead to disfellowshipping must be shown which Bible passage he

or she is supposed to have violated. My experience with judicial committees when someone is accused of causing divisions is that Romans 16:17, 18 is read, and one elder points to the words “create divisions and causes for stumbling.” But this is to read into the text what it does not say. The text does not speak about causing divisions in an unqualified general sense. But it speaks of causing divisions by going against Christian teaching and by seducing other Christians to do the same. So, the scriptural reason for disfellowshipping, in this case, is the divisions that were created as a consequence of promoting a sect and not divisions in general. Thus, the disfellowshipping offense construed from Romans 16:17, 18 is to promote a sect.

It is important to note that causing divisions, in itself, is not a disfellowshipping offense. Divisions can result from doing what is right, as well as by doing what is wrong. In 1 Corinthians 11:19 (NWT84) Paul says:

For there must also be sects (*hairesis*) among YOU, that the persons approved may also become manifest among YOU.

The meaning can be illustrated by the real life situation reported at 1 Corinthians 1:12, 13 (NWT84):

¹² What I mean is this, that each one of YOU says: “I belong to Paul,” “But I to Apollos,” “But I to Cephas,” “But I to Christ.” ¹³ The Christ exists divided.

If we were in the congregation of Corinth with the mentioned “sects” that were developing within the congregation, we would have no choice but to oppose the three mentioned sects and opt to separate ourselves, in effect, creating another division saying: “I belong to Christ.” However, in this case, we have not created a sect because, unlike the others, our purpose in causing divisions is to distance ourselves from the teachings of the real sect promoters, and in support of the original Christian teaching, namely, that we “belong to Christ”. The point is that if something is wrong, we must oppose it, even if that would cause divisions. We may apply this to this present book. The important question is whether the conclusions of each chapter are correct and in accord with the Bible. If they do, in fact, accord with the Bible, Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 11:19 must be applied to the situation. And so the publication of this book is justified even if it causes divisions.

BEING WICKED (*PONEROS*) OR ACTING IN A WICKED WAY

The word *poneros* (“wicked”) occurs 26 times from Romans to Revelation. Only in two passages quoted below does the word refer to particular actions, namely in 1 John 3:12 and 2 John 11, respectively. The quotations are from NWT13:

¹²not like Cain, who originated with the wicked one and slaughtered his brother. And for what reason did he slaughter him? Because his own works were wicked, but those of his brother were righteous.

¹⁰If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your homes or say a greeting to him. ¹¹For the one who says a greeting to him is a sharer in his wicked works.

The words of 1 John 3:12 show that Cain originated with Satan and that he was wicked. The mentioned wicked action is *manslaughter* or murder, and because this action is called “wicked,” it must be a disfellowshipping offense. The word “wicked” at 2 John 11 refers to the actions of the antichrists who probably were part of the pre-Gnostic movement. They were active propagandists, and they wanted to come into the homes of the Christians to spread their false teachings. The antichrists were not a part of the Christian congregations and so could not be disfellowshipped. However, it seems that even some Christians in the congregations were also seduced by this false propaganda and joined this movement. According to 1 John 2:19, such ones “went out from us” voluntarily. Because these are called “wicked,” we can conclude that Christians who “go out from us” and join another religious organization, here the pre-agnostics — deserve to be disfellowshipped.

BEING HANDED OVER TO SATAN (*PARADIDOMI*)

The expression *handed over to Satan* occurs in 1 Corinthians 5:5 in connection with the sexually immoral man who was disfellowshipped. The only other place where it is used is in connection with Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Timothy 1:20). According to 2 Timothy 2:18, they were spreading false teachings, and this means that a person who is permeated by false teachings and is intent on spreading them deserves to be disfellowshipped.

One of the offenses mentioned under the umbrella term “Disassociation” is “Join another religious organization.” Because

religious organizations are spreading false teachings, joining such a religious organization puts the person in the same class as Hymenaeus and Alexander. Because of this, joining a religious organization is a disfellowshipping offense, according to the Bible. In reality, spreading false teachings and joining a religious organization constitute one disfellowshipping offense based on the Bible — spreading false teachings. But because both are listed separately in the *Shepherd* book, I list them as two separate disfellowshipping offenses.

Applying the criteria for actions that are disfellowshipping offenses, shows that in addition to the seven mentioned in 1 Corinthians, chapters 5 and 6, four other disfellowshipping offenses are found in the Christian Greek Scriptures, namely, ***spreading false teachings, join another religious organization, making a sect***, and ***manslaughter***.

THE ELEVEN DISFELLOWSHIPPING OFFENSES FOUND IN THE CHRISTIAN GREEK SCRIPTURES

On the basis of the discussion above, 11 different disfellowshipping offenses can be found in the Christian Greek Scriptures, and table 1.1 has a list of these disfellowshipping offenses.

Table 1.1 List of the eleven disfellowshipping offenses in the Christian Greek Scriptures

<i> pornos </i>	A man or woman who practices sexually immoral intercourse. (1 Cor. 6:9)
<i> eidōlolatrēs </i>	One who participates in idol worship. (1 Cor. 6:9)
<i> kleptēs </i>	A thief. (1 Cor. 6:10)
<i> pleonektēs </i>	An Exploiter (Wrongly written in the <i>Shepherd</i> book as “Greed,” 1 Cor. 6:10).
<i> methysos </i>	A drunkard. (1 Cor. 6:10)
<i> loidoros </i>	A reviler, an abusive person. (1 Cor. 6:10)
<i> harpax </i>	A rapacious person, a robber. (1 Cor. 6:10)
<i> anatrepō </i>	One who is spreading false teachings. (2 Tim. 2:18; 1 Tim 1:20)
<i> hairesis </i>	One who is making or promoting a sect. (Titus 3:10)
<i> planos </i>	One who is joining another religious organization. (2 John 7, 10)

On my website www.mybelovedreligion.no each of the 11 disfellowshipping offenses are discussed in detail in the category “The eleven disfellowshipping offenses.”

The members of the GB accept all the 11 offenses on the list as disfellowshipping offenses. But they have added 37 other disfellowshipping offenses that have no basis in the Bible. These will be discussed below.

THE THIRTY-SEVEN DISFELLOWSHIPPING OFFENSES INTRODUCED BY THE GOVERNING BODY

In the *Shepherd* book that was published in 2019, there are 46 disfellowshipping offenses (including the four disassociation offenses). Of these, 35 are invented and introduced by the members of the GB without any basis in the Bible. They have also introduced two other disfellowshipping offenses.

In the spring 1965, when I started as a circuit servant (circuit overseer), I received the book *Questions in Connection with the Service of the Kingdom* (1961). This book was written for judicial committees, and was designed to help them to answer questions about right and wrong conduct. This book included seven disfellowshipping offenses. In the last part of the 20th century, some new disfellowshipping offenses were invented, and in the book for elders, “*Pay attention to yourself and to all the flock*” (1991) I count 19 different disfellowshipping offenses. This means that in addition to the 11 disfellowshipping offenses that are based on the Bible, eight other disfellowshipping offenses were invented and introduced at that time. Between the years 2000 and 2010, Ted Jaracz was the leading member of the GB. He was a hardliner, and under his leadership, most of the 29 disfellowshipping offenses that were lacking in 1991 were invented and introduced. This is confirmed by a comparison of the revised *Shepherd* book of 2019 with its 2010 predecessor, where all the 35 extrabiblical disfellowshipping offenses that are written in the *Shepherd* book of 2019 were already established.²

2. See the article, “The power struggle in the Governing Body in the 1980s and 1990s” in the category, “The Governing Body.”

I will now present a list of the disfellowshipping offenses invented and introduced by the GB, and after that, I will make a study of some of these in order to see how they were introduced.

Table 1.2 List of the thirty-seven disfellowshipping offenses that are not based on the Bible

	SEXUAL IMMORALITY
1	Strong circumstantial evidence of <i>porneia</i> .
2	Adulterous marriage.
3	Child abuse.
	GROSS UNCLEANNESS/UNCLEANNESS WITH GREEDINESS
4	Momentary touching of intimate body parts or caressing of breasts.
5	Immoral conversations over the telephone or the Internet.
6	Viewing abhorrent forms of pornography.
7	Misuse of tobacco.
8	Use of marijuana, betel nut.
9	Abuse of medical, illicit, or addictive drugs.
10	Extreme physical uncleanness.
11	Oral or anal copulation inside marriage.
	BRAZEN CONDUCT
12	Unnecessary association with disfellowshipped or disassociated individuals.
13	Dating, though not Scripturally free to remarry.

14	Brazen conduct in different situations.
	INDEPENDENT ACTIONS
15	Gluttony.
16	Bloodguilt.
17	Deliberate, malicious lying; bearing false witness.
18	Fraud.
19	Slander.
20	Obscene speech.
21	Gambling.
22	Greed.
23	Bride price, high.
24	Refusal to provide for the family.
25	Fits of anger.
26	Professional boxing.
27	Violence, domestic violence.
	APOSTASY
28	Celebrating false religious holidays.
29	Participation in interfaith activities.
30	Causing divisions of any kind.
31	Employment promoting false religion.

32	Spiritism.
	DISASSOCIATION
33	Leave Jehovah’s Witnesses.
34	Accepting blood transfusion.
35	Violating Christian neutrality. ³
	NOT IN THE <i>SHEPHERD</i> BOOK
36	Antigovernment activity.
37	Disagreement with the GB in mundane issues. ⁴

The basic reason behind the inventions of extrabiblical disfellowshipping offenses is the change of the organization from being theocratic and cherishing Christian freedom to becoming autocratic with the GB exercising dictatorial powers. I will illustrate this with some examples.

FROM CHRISTIAN FREEDOM TO AUTHORITARIAN LAW

A concept in connection with secular work that almost has become a mantra for the present GB is “being a clear accomplice of.” This concept has been stretched to its limit by the present GB, and it is applied inside the congregations. A quotation from *The Watchtower* of September 15, 1951, page 574, that has been quoted before, shows how the leaders of the theocratic organization of JW after World War II stood up for Christian freedom:

3. A fourth action qualifying as “disassociation” is listed in the *Shepherd* book (18.3.2): “Joining another religious organization and making known his intention to remain with it” Because this is one of the eleven disfellowshipping offenses that are based on the Bible, this action is discussed together with these offenses.

4. A discussion of the two disfellowshipping offenses that are not mentioned in the *Shepherd* book is found in the Appendix of the article, “Jehovah’s discipline — the true regime of disfellowshipping” in the category, “Disfellowshipping.”

The Watchtower Society is organized for the purpose of preaching the good news of the Kingdom in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all nations, and it encourages and aids all to have a part in that work, freely advising as to the most effective procedures. ***As to other forms of activity or work the Society has no specific recommendation to make.*** To draw up rules for all the possible situations relative to secular work would embark us upon the compilation of a voluminous, Talmudlike set of regulations, seeking to make all the fine distinctions as to when and when not certain work becomes objectionable. The Lord has not laid that responsibility upon the Society; it is each individual's responsibility to decide his own case. To illustrate the problem involved, consider the matter of selling Christmas cards or trees. If that is wrong, then what about the butcher that sells a turkey for a Christmas dinner, or the saleslady that sells a sweater to be used as a Christmas present? Where is the line to be drawn? Or, when does work become defense work? You do not have to be working on a tank assembly line to be making items used in warfare...

The Society's silence on these matters is not to be viewed as giving consent, nor is it to be viewed as a condemnation we do not wish to openly express. It means that we think it is the individual's responsibility to choose, not ours. It is his conscience that must be at ease for his course, not ours... ***So let each one accept his own responsibility and answer to his own conscience, not criticizing others or being criticized by them, when individual consciences allow different decisions on the same matter.***

Please note that in the free Christian community of JW after World War II the Society (the leaders of JW connected with the Watchtower Society) ***“had no specific recommendation”*** regarding ***“forms of activity or work,”*** except for the preaching of the good news of the Kingdom! But how should anarchy be avoided? By the help of the Christian conscience. And we note that Christians could ***“make different decisions on the same matters.”*** In no way do the comments in the article contribute to divisions. Because the possibility of ***“different decisions”*** did not relate to faith issues based on the Bible but to different decisions in connections with ***activities and work.***

In his account about his life as one of Jehovah's Witnesses for several decades, A.H. Macmillan had an interesting observation about how N.H. Knorr, the president of the Watchtower Society from 1942, viewed unity:

Have you ever noticed how different ministers, representing the same religious organization, teach somewhat different ideas on the same subject? Conferences within their church systems are continually trying to iron out these differences, yet they persist. Knorr believed that not only should all

Christians be ministers, but all should teach in exact unity of thought. Would this be possible without making “parrots” of them? Knorr believed it could be, and set out to do it... (some brothers in) the organization were recognized as accomplished speakers... But Knorr wanted everyone in the organization to be “ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you.”...

Organizationally we were now on solid footing, and the maturity of the Society as a whole was quite evident. But Knorr realized that every minister must be personally equipped to preach... Now Knorr embarked on a campaign to bring maturity to every one of Jehovah’s witnesses and especially prepare them to preach individually yet without contradicting one another...

Now the training program began in earnest. In April of 1943 special schools were organized in every congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses which became a regular part of congregational activity.⁵

The goal of Knorr, as expressed by Macmillan, was to educate each Witness by means of personal Bible study and programs at the meetings to become a mature Christian. This would result in unity in faith, without compromising individuality, and the ability of each Witness to make balanced decisions on the basis of his or her conscience.

Today, the situation is quite different, which means that the Witnesses have become mere parrots of the GB. They repeat whatever the GB says, and there is no call for independent Bible study, let alone any education as to how deep Bible study is done. Today, there is “a Talmud-like set of regulations” made by the GB, exactly what the article above warned against. The Witnesses believe that everything the members of the GB do or say comes from God and is, therefore, the truth. When the GB changes something, the convictions of the Witnesses undergo a kind of “reboot,” so that the new view is now accepted as coming directly from God as well. And no one seems to notice that the previous viewpoint, now considered to be wrong, was at one time also believed to have come from God. Indeed, when the GB makes a change, the whole JW community is simply “rebooted” and the program simply runs from there — as if the former glitch in the programming never existed. This is what I call “mindless conformity.”

The most recent example of this kind of conformity is the letter to the elders of September 27, 2021 regarding the issue of Covid-19 vaccination.

5. A.H. Macmillan, *Faith on the March* (1956), pages 169, 170, 193.

If anyone in a congregation voices a different view from that of the GB on even this mundane issue, he could be disfellowshipped because he is ‘creating divisions’ in the congregation “contrary to the teaching [on vaccinations] that you have learned” from the GB.⁶

I will now return to a discussion of employment. The Question from Readers column in *The Watchtower* of February 1, 1954, page 94, has the following question: “Is gambling a violation of Bible principles?”

Gambling appeals to selfishness and weakens moral fiber; it tempts many into habits of cheating and crookedness... Can a Christian be employed in a gambling enterprise that is legally recognized and allowed? He may think that he can do so if he refrains from gambling himself or allowing his spiritual brothers to gamble through his services. One may be able to conscientiously do this, while another would not be able to do so in good conscience. Each one will have to decide individually whether he can or cannot do so conscientiously. It is doubtless preferable to be separate from the atmosphere surrounding such activities, and the Christian may wisely arrange to make a change in his occupation. It is a matter each one must decide for himself and in accord with his circumstances and conscience. The Watch Tower Society does not decide as to an individual’s employment, as we previously stated in the September 15, 1951, *Watchtower*, page 574.

The issue here is gambling, and we note that even though it is said that “gambling appeals to selfishness and weakens moral fiber,” to participate in gambling, or even to be employed in a gambling enterprise, remains a personal matter based on one’s conscience. This is again a typical example of Christian freedom. In the present autocratic organization, a person who is employed by a gambling enterprise must change his work within six months or else be disfellowshipped.

Gambling is not mentioned in the Bible, and so any rule regarding gambling is a human commandment. The arbitrariness of the Talmud-like rules of the GB, is that the view of gambling has changed. From 1961, gambling was viewed as *extortion* but that view was discarded in 1972, and from then on, gambling was viewed as *greed*. And the view of

6. Voicing disagreement with the GB regarding mundane issues, such as vaccination, is one of the two disfellowshipping offenses that are not mentioned in the *Shepherd* book.

which kinds of gambling that represent disfellowshipping offenses has changed eight times since the 1950s.⁷

I will now discuss one question related to “activities.” From the time of World War II, using tobacco in some form was viewed by the leaders of JW as a filthy habit. This was mentioned in an article in *The Watchtower* of 1942, page 205. But the article also said:

To be sure, the Society has no power or authority or desire to say that a person who wishes to use tobacco may not do so. Nor can it say, “You may not witness for the Kingdom.”⁸

The book *Questions in Connection With the Service of the Kingdom* (1961) was published to help judicial committees. On page 78 we find the question, “Will the use of tobacco result in restrictions for one who wants to serve Jehovah?”:

If a person who uses tobacco, is presenting himself for baptism, one should in a friendly manner show him that the use of tobacco is an impure habit that is not becoming for a servant of God. Even though we will not refuse to baptize him because he uses tobacco, we will not view him as a good example for the brothers in the congregation. And as long as he uses tobacco we will not appoint him as a ministerial servant or an overseer in the Christian organization. He cannot receive any privileges of service. He can participate in the theocratic ministry school and give talks, but he will not be allowed to give lectures. He may go from house to house, make back-calls, and conduct Bible studies, and in other ways be helping in the field service, as he is looking to Jehovah to get the power to quit his impure habit. One who is using tobacco cannot serve as pioneer or a fulltime representative for the theocratic organization.

There may be exceptions from this rule. But one who is using tobacco can only be appointed as a ministerial servant or an overseer if there is no other baptized person in the congregation who can serve as a servant. If one who is using tobacco is appointed as a servant, he must accept that he cannot use tobacco publicly while he is preaching in the field or in the neighborhood of the Kingdom Hall. And he must make conscious efforts to quit this bad habit.

Tobacco was still viewed as a filthy habit. Nevertheless, if no person could fill the need, a Witness who used tobacco could be appointed as a

7. See my article, “Gambling — changed viewpoints and subjective judgments,” in the category “Reversed view of disfellowshipping offenses,”

8. See my article, “The use of tobacco” in the category “Gross uncleanness with greediness.”

ministerial servant or an overseer. But in 1973, there was a change of view. *The Watchtower* of 1973, pages 340 and 341, stated that any Witness who used tobacco would be disfellowshipped if he or she did not quit the habit within six months. Tobacco is not mentioned in the Bible, so this was a human commandment that was invented and introduced by the GB. So again, we see an example of the ***mindless conformity*** in contrast with the Christian freedom that existed after World War II.

The discussion above has shown how the two disfellowshipping offenses, *gambling* and *the use of tobacco* were added to the list of disfellowshipping offenses and how Christian freedom was changed to authoritarianism.

DISASSOCIATION — A FALSE DISCLAIMER

The concept “to disassociate oneself” is not found in the Bible. The *Shepherd* book, chapter 18, points 1 and 2, says:

Whereas disfellowshipping is an action taken by a judicial committee against an unrepentant wrongdoer, disassociation is an action taken by a baptized member of the congregation who no longer desires to be one of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

The book lists the four following situations as “actions that may indicate disassociation”:

- 1) Making Known a Firm Decision to Be Known No Longer as One of Jehovah’s Witnesses.
- 2) Joining another Religious Organization and Making Known His Intention to Remain with It.
- 3) Willingly and Unrepentantly Accepting Blood.
- 4) Taking a Course That Violates Christian Neutrality.

The basic conclusion of this section is that disassociation is exactly the same as disfellowshipping. However, by claiming that a person has left his congregation of his own free will, instead of being disfellowshipped, because he no longer desires to be one of Jehovah’s Witnesses, the GB can renounce any responsibility for his leaving the organization. But this is a false disclaimer.

I will now look at the issue regarding disfellowshipping versus disassociation from a historical point of view. It is interesting that originally persons who joined another religious organization, accepted a blood

transfusion, or violated Christian neutrality by his work, were disfellowshipped. But today, they are not disfellowshipped, but the claim is that they have disassociated themselves from the congregation of their own free will. This is, of course, utter nonsense, as my historical review will show.

WILLINGLY AND UNREPENTANTLY ACCEPTING BLOOD

According to the Bible, the blood of each creature represents its life and is God's special property. Blood must not be used for anything. That is the reason why JW do not eat blood or accept blood transfusions. *The Watchtower* of January 15, 1961, page 63, wrote:

In view of the seriousness of taking blood into the human system by a transfusion, would violation of the Holy Scriptures in this regard subject the dedicated, baptized receiver of blood transfusion to being disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation? The inspired Holy Scriptures answer yes.

The disfellowshipping of Witnesses who accepted blood without showing regret continued for more than 30 years. In 1991, the book for elders, *"Pay attention to yourselves and to all the flock,"* was published. Together with the book came a list of disfellowshipping offenses, and it showed that willingly accepting a blood transfusion still was a disfellowshipping offense.

But this stance could lead to problems. If a doctor said that a patient would die if he did not accept blood, but he would not accept blood because he was afraid of being disfellowshipped, the leadership of Jehovah's Witness (the Governing Body) could be held responsible. If a patient died, a court ruling could force the GB to pay damages.

Because of this, the GB came up with an "ingenious" solution. Witnesses who willingly had accepted blood without having regretted it would no longer be disfellowshipped. But this action would from now on be viewed as a decision made by the Witness to leave the organization of his own free will, because he no longer desired to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses. From this standpoint, the GB could not be held responsible for problems connected with anyone's refusal to accept a blood transfusion. The new view was expressed in a list for judicial committees of disfellowshipping offenses of May 2005, where accepting blood is listed as disassociation and not as disfellowshipping.

JOINING ANOTHER RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION

From 1942 and for 44 years, Witnesses who joined another religious organization were disfellowshipped. This is, for example, stated in the book for judicial committees *Questions in Connection With the Service of the Kingdom* (1961), page 58.

However, this was changed in a letter from the branch office in Norway to the elders dated June 25, 1986:

We write to you to inform you about a change in the procedure that must be followed if a member of the congregation joins another religious organization. Until now, the case of a person who joins a religious organization has been handled by a judicial committee with a possible disfellowshipping as a result. However, one has decided that it will be more fitting to view a person who joins a false religious organization as one who, by his actions, has disassociated himself from the congregation of Jehovah's Witnesses. This is also the way we view a person who joins a worldly organization whose goal is contrary to the Bible, and because of this, will be judged by God. (The author's underlining)

No reason for this change is given, except that "one has decided it will be more fitting."

VIOLATING CHRISTIAN NEUTRALITY

The mentioned list from May 2005 lists three actions indicating that one has disassociated himself from the Christian congregation, namely points 2), 3), and 4) above.

I have not found any article in the Watchtower Index discussing how to treat a person who has voted in a political election before 1991. However, the book for judicial committees *Questions in Connection With the Service of the Kingdom* (1961), page 61, says:

If a dedicated Christian accepts a political position or votes for political candidates, can he then continue to be a member of the congregation?

It is obvious that one cannot serve two lords, and a person who is voted in to a political position, will choose to walk in the ways of this world, and he cannot be viewed as one who belongs to the congregation. (Matthew 6:24) The congregation may be informed that his publisher card is removed from the card file of active publishers.

A person who voluntarily votes for a politician also takes part in the pursuits of this world. He returns to the world in order to be engaged in the pursuits

of the world, and he, therefore, separates himself from the new world society. His card should be removed from the card file of active publishers. If he regrets his course and shows that he understands the right view of a Christian to the pursuits of the world, he may write a letter where he asks to be viewed as a publisher again.

The main point in the quotation above is that to take a political stance will compromise a person's loyalty to God's government, his heavenly kingdom. This means that a person who violates his neutrality cannot at the same time be one of Jehovah's Witnesses. The viewpoint of the book is that by violating his neutrality, the person has chosen to leave the Christian congregation and become part of the world again. The book says that the publisher's card of the person who has voted will be removed from the file of the congregation. But the book does not say that such a person should be shunned, but he or she would be treated in the same way as other worldly persons. Supporting this is the fact that a person who voluntarily left the organization would not be shunned before the year 1981, as I show below.

While voting at elections only rarely has been mentioned, violating Christian neutrality by one's secular works has been discussed several times. The *Kingdom Ministry* of February 1977, page 3, says:

The congregation's responsibility

Where a brother engages in employment that clearly violates God's law, the congregation and its elders rightly become concerned on the matter. Where work or a product thereof is condemned in the Scriptures or is such as to make one an accomplice or promoter in wrongdoing, the elders should first endeavor to help the person see the wrongness of his course. In such cases where the connection is definite and evident, it should be possible to make what the Bible says clear to him and enable him to see why it does indeed apply to him. It may, however, take a number of discussions, perhaps over a period of some weeks, to help him see the point and give prayerful consideration to what has been brought to his attention. If it is definitely established that his employment violates Christian principles and he, nevertheless, insists on continuing in it, *he may be disfellowshipped from the congregation.*

The quotation refers to work that makes "one an accomplice or promoter in wrongdoing," and then it speaks of a situation "where the connection is definite and evident." The important point is the last sentence of the quotation. It shows that in 1977 a Witness who had

employment that was condemned in the Scriptures, which must include violation of his neutrality, would be disfellowshipped.

However, only four years after the article in the *Kingdom Ministry*, the procedure of how to treat a person who violated his neutrality by his work changed, *The Watchtower* of September 15, 1981, page 24, wrote:

¹⁵ Or, a person might renounce his place in the Christian congregation by his actions, such as by becoming part of an organization whose objective is contrary to the Bible, and, hence, is under judgment by Jehovah God. (Compare Revelation 19:17-21; Isaiah 2:4.) So if one who was a Christian chose to join those who are disapproved of God, it would be fitting for the congregation to acknowledge by a brief announcement that *he had disassociated himself and is no longer one of Jehovah's Witnesses.*

The change of viewpoint is that in 1977, a person was disfellowshipped if he violated his neutrality by his work. But from 1981 until 2022, the view has been that such a person has disassociated himself from the Christian congregation because he no longer desires to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

MAKING KNOWN THE DECISION TO LEAVE JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

If a Witness writes a letter saying that he no longer wants to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses, or if he says this to the elders, this is a clear example of voluntary separation, so we can rightly say that he has disassociated himself from the congregation because he no longer desires to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses.

How will such a person be treated? Before 1981, persons who resigned from their congregation and by this disassociated themselves were treated like other persons outside the organization and not as disfellowshipped persons. But *The Watchtower* of September 15, 1981, pages 23, changed this procedure:

Hence, out of love Christian elders and others might visit and help the one who has grown weak and inactive. (1 Thess. 5:14; Rom. 15:1; Heb. 12:12, 13) It is another matter, though, when a person repudiates his being a Christian and disassociates himself.

Persons who make themselves "not of our sort" by deliberately rejecting the faith and beliefs of Jehovah's Witnesses should appropriately be viewed and treated, as are those who have been disfellowshipped for wrongdoing.

This is the first time the Watchtower literature says that disassociated persons must be treated the same as disfellowshipped persons and should be shunned. What is the purpose of shunning, according to JW? After quoting the words ““quit mixing in company with” in 1 Corinthians 5:11. *The Watchtower* of July 1, 1963, page 413, says:

Therefore the members of the congregation will not associate with the disfellowshipped one, either in the Kingdom Hall or elsewhere. They will not converse with such one or show him recognition in any way. If the disfellowshipped person attempts to talk to others in the congregation, they should walk away from him. In this way he will feel the full import of his sin. Otherwise, if all communicated freely with the offender, he would be tempted to feel that his transgression was not such a terrible thing.

These words show that the purpose of shunning a person, is to help him to understand that he must change his course and return to the congregation. In view of this, we may ask? What is the purpose of shunning a person who has written a letter saying that he no longer wants be one of Jehovah’s Witnesses? This person has taken the stance that he does not want to be in the congregation, so the purpose of shunning him cannot be that he should return to the congregation. The conclusion we must draw is that the purpose of shunning disassociated persons is not benevolent — it is not to help them in any way. But in the eyes of the members of the GB, resigning from JW is a serious sin, and shunning those who resign (those who disassociate themselves) is solely a way of punishing them for their “sin.”

At the website [jw.org](http://www.jw.org), the following question is asked: “Can a person resign from being one of Jehovah’s Witnesses?” The following answer is given:

Yes. A person can resign from our organization in two ways:

By formal request. Either orally or in writing, a person can state his decision that he no longer wants to be known as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

By action. A person can take an action that places him outside our worldwide brotherhood. (1 Peter 5:9) For example, he might join another religion and make known his intention to remain part of it.—1 John 2:19.⁹

These answers are misleading because the readers are not told that strong, even traumatic, sanctions are placed upon the one who orally or

9. <https://www.jw.org/en/jehovahs-witnesses/faq/resign/>.

by letter expresses that he no longer desires to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses. This means that a Witness cannot "resign" in the normal sense of the word. But if he wants to leave, he is, in reality, disfellowshipped from the congregation. The questions in connection with resigning by actions and not by words has already been discussed above.

DISASSOCIATION IS EXACTLY THE SAME AS DISFELLOWSHIPPING

In the previous sections, it was shown that willingly accepting blood, joining another religious organization, and violating Christian neutrality through one's work were for many years disfellowshipping offenses. At present, the three mentioned actions are no longer disfellowshipping offenses. But the view is that each action shows that the person of his own free will has disassociated himself from the congregation because he no longer desires to be one of Jehovah's Witnesses. However, the nature of the three actions that previously led to disfellowshipping, but that now represent disassociation, have not changed in any way. And this alone shows that disassociation is exactly the same as disfellowshipping — only the name is different.

The book for elders *"Pay Attention to Yourselves and to All the Flock"* (1991), page 102, says:

Those that disassociate themselves should be viewed and be treated the same as disfellowshipped persons.

When a disassociated person is 'viewed and treated the same as a disfellowshipped person,' i.e., he or she is shunned by the Witnesses, disassociation and disfellowshipping must be exactly the same thing.

The difference that the GB claims, in this case, is that a disfellowshipped person is thrown out of the congregation while a disassociated person has left the congregation voluntarily. This difference is artificial; it is, in reality, simply a ploy or a gimmick. The fact is that both the one that is disfellowshipped and the disassociated one are thrown out of the congregation. This is seen in the *Shepherd* book 18.3 (4):

If his employment makes him a clear accomplice in nonneutral activities, he should generally be allowed six months to make an adjustment. If he does not, he has disassociated himself.

This situation is similar to several other situations that have been discussed in the book. The elders are given almost unlimited power in many situations that are ambiguous and unclear. And whether a Witness is allowed to continue to be a member of the congregation or not is based on the subjective viewpoints and gut feelings of the congregation elders.

I illustrate the situation in the following way: A brother works in a big factory, and a small part of its production is sold to the armed forces. In this situation, the elders have the right to say to the brother: “Because a part of the production is sold to the military, you are violating your Christian neutrality by keeping this job. We give you six months to find another job, and if you do not do that, you have disassociated yourself from the congregation because you do not desire to be one of Jehovah’s Witnesses anymore.” If the brother disagrees with the elders and points out that only a small percentage of the production is sold to the military, and these products are made in a department of the factory where he does not work, the elders, in most cases, will not change their minds. They have made their evaluation, and his viewpoints do not count.

So, what will happen in this case? If the brother has not changed his job within six months, the elders will say that he, of his own free will, has left the congregation. But that is simply not true. If the brother, for example, sticks to his viewpoint that he has not violated his neutrality and has no desire to leave the congregation, he will, nonetheless, not be allowed to continue to be a member of the congregation. This shows that he has not voluntarily left the congregation. The requirement of the *Shepherd* book is that a confession of a serious sin must be clear and unambiguous, and there must be two witnesses to that confession. In situations of disassociation, this procedure is turned upside down. It is the elders who make “the confession” for him, both that he has committed a serious sin and that he no longer desires to be one of Jehovah’s witnesses. And if he wants to continue to be a member of the congregation, he will not be allowed to stay in the congregation.¹⁰

10. Four detailed studies of the disassociation actions are found in the category, “Disassociation not based on the Bible”: “Resigning from Jehovah’s Witnesses leads to shunning,” “Willingly and unrepentantly accepting blood,” “Disassociation by joining another religious organization,” and “Disassociation because of the violation of the Christian neutrality.”

Disassociation is exactly the same as disfellowshipping because:

- 1) Three of the four disassociation criteria were for many years designated as disfellowshipping offenses, but now they are said to indicate voluntary disassociation — but the nature and consequences of the actions have not changed.
- 2) A person who has broken one of the three disassociation criteria but who desires to continue to be a member of the congregation will not be allowed to do that. So, in actual fact, he is thrown out of the congregation in the same way as one who has been disfellowshipped.

The “Pay Attention” book for elders says that a disassociated person should be viewed and treated (shunned) in the same way as a disfellowshipped person.

THE GOVERNING BODY’S TWISTING OF GREEK WORDS

None of the eight members of the GB can read the text of the Bible in Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic. Therefore, when these persons proceed to interpret the Bible for the community of Jehovah’s Witnesses, this lack of knowledge obviously creates problems. The result is that the members of the GB have treated several Greek words that are important in connection with disfellowshipping offenses in an amateurish and flawed way. A short introduction to how Greek words can be understood follows.

THE APPLICATION OF LEXICAL SEMANTICS

When we are looking for the exact meaning of Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic words, we must keep in mind that the entries we find in lexicons do not present the *lexical meaning* of the words. These entries are only glosses showing the core meaning of a word and how this word in the source language has been translated into English.

Psycholinguistic experiments have shown that humans have a mental lexicon in their minds. Each word in the Greek language signals a concept in the minds of native Greek speakers. A concept has a relatively clear core but becomes fuzzy towards the edges. Each concept may also be called “the semantic field” of the word. Communication means to make visible

one area of the concept (of its semantic field) and let the other areas remain invisible. When a native speaker communicates with others in writing or by word, in most cases the readers or listeners will, with the help of the context, instantly understand which area of each concept (of its semantic field) the speaker or writer makes visible. Thus, *the concepts in the minds of native speakers represent the lexical meaning* of each word and not the entries in latter-day lexicons.

The problem is that all the native speakers of the Biblical languages are dead, so it is impossible to understand the full lexical meaning of each word. The best we can do is to look at the contexts in which a word is used in the Scriptures. This can help us to ascertain the core meaning of a particular word and perhaps some other parts of its semantic field. If a word is used just one time, very little of its semantic field can be understood. The more the word is used, the more of its semantic field can be ascertained.

In addition to the lexical meaning of a word (the concept in the native speaker’s mind), it also has one or more *references*. The *references* are the things in the world that are denoted by the word — things outside of its semantic field of meaning. It is very important to distinguish between the *references* of a word and the *core meaning* of that word. Words can be classified in connection with their references—how clear or distinct these references are. The linguist Moises Silva discussed this issue, and he has the following table:¹¹

fully referential	mostly referential	partly referential	non-referential
Plato	law	cold	beautiful

How certain we can be in our narrowing down the meaning of a word relates to its referentiality. For non-referential words such as “beautiful,” the uncertainty is great. We may, for example, say, “The bird is beautiful.” This is a positive designation, but we do not know exactly what the speaker had in mind.

I will apply the principles of lexical semantics to two different umbrella-terms, namely to *akatharsia* (“uncleanness”) under which eight different

11. Silva, *Biblical Words & Their Meaning*, page 107.

disfellowshipping offenses are subsumed, and *aselgeia* (NWT13: “brazen conduct”; my translation: “unrestrained lust”), under which three disfellowshipping offenses are subsumed.

In the discussion below, the two Greek words *aselgeia* (“unrestrained lust” — my translation) and *akatharsia* (“uncleanness”) will be discussed. There are three problems in connection with the meaning and references of these words, 1) *aselgeia* is non-referential, and *akatharsia* is non-referential or partly referential, 2) the Classical Greek meanings are not necessarily identical with the meanings in the Christian Greek Scriptures,¹² and 3) the contexts where *aselgeia* and *akatharsia* occur do not reveal anything of their semantic fields. Therefore, it is impossible to connect particular actions with *aselgeia*. And actions can only be connected with *akatharsia* when the context explicitly does that.

A DISCUSSION OF THE WORD *ASELGEIA*

The word *aselgeia* does not occur in the apostle Paul’s list of disfellowshipping offenses in 1 Corinthians chapters 5 and 6. And there is no other passage in the Christian Greek Scriptures where *aselgeia* is shown to be a disfellowshipping offense.

Regarding *aselgeia*, *The Watchtower* of July 15, 2006, page 30, says:

As the foregoing definitions show, “loose conduct” involves two elements: (1) The conduct itself is a serious violation of God’s laws, and (2) the attitude of the wrongdoer is disrespectful, insolent.

Therefore, “loose conduct” [*aselgeia*] does not refer to bad conduct of a minor nature. It pertains to acts that are serious violations of God’s laws and that reflect a brazen or boldly contemptuous attitude—a spirit that betrays disrespect or even contempt for authority, laws, and standards. Paul links loose conduct with illicit intercourse. (Romans 13:13, 14) Since Galatians 5:19–21 lists loose conduct among a number of sinful practices that would disqualify one from inheriting God’s Kingdom, loose conduct is grounds for reproof and possible disfellowshipping from the Christian congregation.

12. Greek words in the Christian Greek Scriptures may have Hebrew or Christian connotations that are lacking in Classical Greek. Therefore, a Greek word can only be understood in the light of *its use in the Christian Greek Scriptures* and not on the basis of entries in Greek lexicons. Illustrating this issue is the fact that the Greek words *hades* (“the grave”), *psykhē* (“soul”), *kosmos* (“world”), and *agapē* (“love”) have very different meanings and references in Classical Greek compared with New Testament Greek.

All the basic claims in the quotation above are wrong. The works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21 do not represent disfellowshipping offenses. But persons who practice these and do not repent will not inherit God’s kingdom. The discussion below shows that *aselgeia* (“loose conduct” NWT84) does not involve “serious violations of God’s laws” or an attitude that is “disrespectful or insolent.”

What is the meaning of “loose conduct” (*aselgeia*)? Below are the entries of six Greek-English lexicons. The words in parentheses are definitions of the rare English words that are found in the Greek lexicons.

Table 5.5. Glosses applied to *aselgeia* (loose conduct)

Liddell and Scott	<p>Licentiousness (lacking legal or moral restraints). Wanton (merciless, inhumane; being without check or limitation; lewd, bawdy) violence. Insolence (the quality or state of being rude not showing respect). Vulgar (lacking cultivation, perception, or taste; offensive in language; lewdly or profanely indecent) abuse (a corrupt practice or custom; language that condemns or vilifies usually unjustly).</p>
Moulton and Milligan	<p>An obscure and badly-spelled document. The idea of sensuality (related to or consisting in the gratification of the senses or the indulgence of appetite) associated with the word in late Greek.</p>
Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich	<p>Licentiousness (lacking legal or moral restraints). Debauchery (extreme indulgence in bodily pleasures and especially sexual pleasures: behavior involving sex, drugs, alcohol, etc. that is often considered immoral). Sensuality (related to or consisting in the gratification of the senses or the indulgence of appetite). Indecent conduct, (Grossly improper or offensive conduct). Licentious desires (Lacking legal or moral restraints).</p>
DNTT	<p>Licentiousness (Lacking legal or moral restraints).</p>
TDNT	<p>License (freedom of action) mostly in the physical sphere. Voluptuousness (suggesting sensual pleasure</p>

	<p>by fullness and beauty of form; full of delight or pleasure to the senses; conducive to or arising from sensuous or sensual gratification).</p> <p>Debauchery (extreme indulgence in bodily pleasures and especially sexual pleasures: behavior involving sex, drugs, alcohol, etc. that is often considered immoral).</p> <p>Sexual excess.</p> <p>Heresy.</p> <p>Apostasy.</p>
Grimm	<p>Unbridled lust.</p> <p>Excess.</p> <p>Licentiousness (Lacking legal or moral restraints).</p> <p>Lasciviousness (Lewd; lustful).</p> <p>Wantonness (Merciless, inhumane; being without check or limitation).</p> <p>Outrageousness (exceeding the limits of what is usual; violent, unrestrained).</p> <p>Shamelessness (having no shame; insensible to disgrace).</p> <p>Insolence (The quality or state of being rude not showing respect).</p>

I will now use in my analysis of this word the principles of lexical semantics outlined above. The word *aselgeia* is non-referential, and that is why the entries above point in many different directions. In order to understand the consequences of this, I will use the fully referential word *porneia* as a study in contrasts.

The lexical meaning of a word is the concept it has in the mind of native speakers (its semantic field). Based on this concept, references to different concrete and abstract notions and actions can be made. The concept of *porneia* is clear. Being fully referential, it has no core meaning, which becomes fuzzy toward the edges. But it has one clear meaning, namely, “sexually immoral intercourse” — sexual intercourse with someone to whom one is not married. And that is the reason why persons practicing *porneia* and are, thus, permeated by it can be expelled from the Christian congregation.

Among the words used for *aselgeia* in the six lexicons, only the three words in **Chalkduster** script are fully referential and clearly identifiable, namely, “an obscure and badly-spelled document,” “heresy,” and “apostasy.” However, these references are based on extra-biblical sources and cannot be used as a definition of the word in the Christian Greek Scriptures.

The seven words in **Bradley Hand** script are also based on extra-biblical sources. These words refer to actions. But the actions are not fully referential and clearly identified, and so it is not possible to know which concrete action is referred to in a given clause if the context does not identify the action. The actions connected with *aselgeia* in extra-biblical sources are (1) violence, (2) abuse of some kind, (3) extreme indulgence in bodily pleasures, often of a sexual nature, (4) grossly improper conduct, and (5) excesses.

The 16 words in *Garamond italics* are non-referential and abstract and represent desires and attitudes. This shows that the core meaning of *aselgeia* is abstract, and the two following abstract ideas seem to represent this core meaning:

- 1) An extreme desire for excessive indulgence in bodily pleasures.
- 2) Legal and moral restraints are lacking; no shame is felt.

The core meaning of *aselgeia* is abstract, it is non-referential, and the word does not refer to concrete, identifiable actions.

A translation of aselgeia as “unrestrained lust”

As mentioned, the entries in the six lexicons are primarily based on extra-biblical sources. But what can we say about the use of *aselgeia* in the Christian Greek Scriptures? E. de Witt Burton has the following comments:

Ashlgeia [*aselgeia*], of doubtful etymology, is used by Greek authors with the meaning “wantonness,” “violence”. . . It is not found in the LXX (canonical books), and in the apocr. only in Wisd. 14:26 and 3 Mac 2:26, in the former passage with probable reference to sensuality, lewdness; in the latter without indication of such limitation. Cf. Trench synom. § XVI, who gives further evidence that *ashlgeia* is not exclusively “lasciviousness” but “wantonness” “unrestrained willfulness.” *Yet in view of Paul’s association of it elsewhere with words denoting sensuality (Rom. 13:1, 2 Cor. 12:21; Ep. 4:19) and its grouping here with*

porneia [*porneia*], and *akatharsia* [*akatharsia*], it is probable that it refers especially to wantonness in sexual relations. Like *akatharsia*, less specific than *porneia*, and referring to any indecent conduct, whether violation of the person or not, *aselgeia* differs from *akatharsia* in that the latter emphasized grossness, the impurity of the conduct, the former its wantonness, its unrestrainedness.¹³ (My italics.)

The author ascribes the meaning “*wantonness or unrestrainedness in sexual relations*” to *aselgeia*. And we note that the author says his definition “is probable” in connection with this word. He reasons that because Paul uses *aselgeia* together with *porneia* (“sexually immoral intercourse”) and *akatharsia* (“uncleanness”) in 2 Corinthians 12:21 and Galatians 5:19, it may be that the word is associated with sexual relations in the Christian Greek Scriptures. However, none of the ten contexts where *aselgeia* occurs indicate that the word refers to *clearly identifiable sexual activities*. So, it is likely that the word is used in the Scriptures in an abstract way as excessive lust for bodily or sexual pleasures or something similar. As an alternative to the author’s conclusions, there may be another reason why the three words are used together. It could be that *aselgeia* refers to the unrestrained lust that leads to sexually immoral intercourse, to *porneia*. Then, the word *porneia* indicates the clearly identifiable unlawful sexual activity, and *akatharsia* refers to the result of *porneia*, namely uncleanness or impurity. As I will show below, there is absolutely no reason to conclude that *aselgeia* and *akatharsia* must refer to disfellowshipping offenses because the two words occur together with the disfellowshipping offense *porneia*.

The meaning of the three words used together: *aselgeia*: strong sexual desire; *porneia*: the strong sexual desire leads to sexually immoral intercourse; *akatharsia*: the result of sexually immoral intercourse is uncleanness.

The word *aselgeia* must be translated, and it is not easy to find the right word when the semantic range is so wide. The NWT13 uses the expression “brazen conduct.” This means “conduct that is shocking and done shamelessly,” and this rendering is, in my view, beside the core meaning of the word. This is so because “brazen conduct” will not naturally be connected with strong sexual desire, which probably is the side of the word

13. Burton, *Galatians*, pages 305, 306.

that the writers of the Scriptures had in mind.¹⁴ I think that the NWT84 rendering “loose conduct” is better, but still not accurate. According to Learner’s Dictionary, an old-fashioned meaning of “loose” is “not respectable sexually; not decent or moral.”¹⁵ However, the focus of *aselgeia* is on the person’s *desires*, and not on his or her *conduct*. Therefore, we need an abstract rendering close to its core meaning. The word “lust” can be defined as “a desire to gratify the senses; bodily appetite; sexual desire, esp. as seeking unrestrained gratification.”¹⁶ These definitions are close to the core meanings listed above. Another side of the core meaning is that restraints are lacking. Therefore, I suggest the translation “*unrestrained lust*” for the word *aselgeia*.

A discussion of passages in the Christian Greek Scriptures with aselgeia

I will now look at some passages where *aselgeia* is found. I start with Romans 13:13, where we find *aselgeia* together with the word *koitē* in the plural. According to BAGD, the basic meaning of *koitē* is “bed.” (Luke 11:7) It can have a positive meaning and refer to the marriage bed. (Hebrews 13:4) But it can also be used as a metaphor. In LXX, its metaphorical meanings can be, according to DNTT: “emission of semen; a laying of seed; sexual congress; intercourse; copulation; marriage bed.” It occurs four times in the Christian Greek Scriptures, three of which have the reference, “bed, as a place of rest” (Luke 11:7), “marriage bed” (Hebrews 13:4), and “sexual intercourse/emission of semen/to conceive” (literally; “Out of one [man] bed having,”) (Romans 9:10). The fourth example occurs in Romans 13:13, where “bed” is in the plural. The translation of this word represents in my view sloppy linguistics: (NIV) “sexual immorality,” (NRSV and RSV) “debauchery,” (NLT), “sexual promiscuity,” (Jerusalem Bible and NAB), “promiscuity,” (NKJV), “lewdness,” (NWT84), “illicit intercourse,” (NWT13) “immoral intercourse.”

Why are all these renderings questionable? The meaning of a metaphor cannot be found in a lexicon. But we need to look at the context, and here we find, 1) “beds” (*koitais*), 2) “wild parties” (*keōmois*), “drunkenness”

14. <https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/brazen>.

15. <http://www.learnersdictionary.com/definition/loose>.

16. <http://www.yourdictionary.com/lust>.

(*methais*), “unrestrained lust” (*aselgeia*), “strife” (*eris*), “jealousy” (*zēlos*); verse 12: “works belonging to darkness” (*erga tou skotous*); verse 14: “desires of the flesh” (*sarkos . . . epithumias*). How can the context help us to find the metaphorical meaning of “beds”?

The words “darkness” and “flesh” show that the word “beds” refers to something that is negative. But because both “works” and “desires” are mentioned, we cannot at the outset know whether the word “beds” refers to actions or merely the desires to do particular actions. Because “bed” can refer to sexual intercourse, and this is the reference in Romans 9:10, the metaphor of “beds” may refer to the kind of sexual intercourse that is connected with the works of darkness and the desires of the flesh. Both “illicit intercourse” (NWT84) and “immoral intercourse” (NWT13) fit both of the mentioned expressions.

But are there alternative actions or desires that also may fit the mentioned expressions? Yes. 1 Corinthians 7:1–5 shows that married couples must respect one another in connection with sexual relations. Verse 3 says:

Let the husband give to his wife her due, and let the wife also do likewise to her husband.

First Peter 3:7 (NWT13) says:

You husbands, in the same way, continue dwelling with them according to knowledge. Assign them honor as to a weaker vessel, the feminine one.

The verses show that sexual relations between husband and wife should occur in a decent way, and the husband should in all areas of life, including sexual relations, honor his wife as the “weaker vessel.” Suppose now that the husband was driven by “unrestrained lust” (*aselgeia*) and demanded sexual relations with her continually, also when she did not want to have such relations. To satisfy his desires, he may even have treated her in a brutal way. Could that be defined as “works of darkness” and “desires of the flesh”? Absolutely! Such actions are often connected with wild parties and drunkenness, and the following word *aselgeia* (“unrestrained lust”) could support this view.

Please note that I am not saying that “beds” refer to the husband’s unrestrained sexual treatment of his wife. But my point is that this is one *possible* reference of “beds,” and there are no clues in the context suggesting that the sexual relations are between a man and a woman that are not

married (i.e., illicit or immoral intercourse). Because “beds” represents a metaphor, and this metaphor can include different things, it will be a service to the reader if the translator does not lock the reader up in the opinion of the translator. Because the LXX uses the metaphor “emission of semen,” and the metaphor “sexual intercourse” is used for the singular word “bed” in Romans 9:10, and the word is plural in 13:13, I would render *koitais* as “emissions of semen”:

Let us walk decently, as in the daytime, not in revelries and drunkenness, not with emissions of semen and unrestrained lust, not in strife and jealousy.

The expression “emissions of semen” can include both illicit intercourse and excessive intercourse with one’s wife. We must also keep in mind that Paul, in his letters, mentioned particular sins and situations that were known to his readers. So, because of their knowledge, the Romans could know the real reference of “beds.”

The noun aselgeia does not represent disfellowshipping offenses

In order to show that *aselgeia* refers to serious violations of God’s laws, *The Watchtower* of July 15, 2006, page 30, says: “Paul links loose conduct with illicit intercourse. (Romans 13:13, 14)” The discussion above shows that this conclusion is not warranted because *koitais* (“beds”) may or may not refer to illicit intercourse. We cannot use a metaphor with uncertain meaning to define the word *aselgeia*. Moreover, verse 14 speaks of “the desires of the flesh,” which refer to mental states and not to actions. The word *zelos* (“jealousy”) that follows *aselgeia* is unquestionably a state of mind, and the same may be the case with *eris* (“strife; discord”). Regarding this word, Louw and Nida say, “It is difficult to determine whether there is definite verbal involvement or whether the reference is essentially to a state of rivalry or strife.” Thus, despite its juxtaposition to the dubious rendering “illicit intercourse,” Romans 13:13, 14 does not show that *aselgeia* refers to “serious violations of God’s laws.” The fact that *aselgeia* is followed by the words “strife” and “jealousy” corroborates the view that this word refers to a state of mind, to “unrestrained lust” and not to particular identifiable actions.

The reference in *The Watchtower* of July 15, 2006, page 30, to Galatians, chapter 5, is also flawed:

Since Galatians 5:19–21 lists loose conduct (*aselgeia*) among a number of sinful practices that would disqualify one from inheriting God’s Kingdom, loose conduct is grounds for reproof and possible disfellowshipping from the Christian congregation.

The argument that because *aselgeia* is listed together with actions that can prevent a person from inheriting God’s Kingdom, it portrays disfellowshipping offenses, is entirely untenable. If the mere inclusion of *aselgeia* in a list of words in Galatians that would disqualify one from inheriting God’s Kingdom are taken to show that *aselgeia* can lead to reproof and disfellowshipping, the same must be true with all the other 14 descriptions of the works of the flesh. But the writers of *The Watchtower* agree that this is not the case with most of these other works of the flesh listed there.

Let us use the tenth commandment as an example (Exodus 20:17, NWT13): “You must not desire your fellow man’s house.” This commandment cannot have been invented by men but only by God. This is so because only God can read the heart and know if a person desires something. It is exactly the same with the Greek word “jealousy” (*zēlos*) in Galatians 5:20. Humans cannot reprove or disfellowship a Christian on the grounds that he or she is jealous because we cannot read the heart of the person. Only God can know that. To be sure, if a person practices jealousy, he or she may not inherit the Kingdom of God, but God is the one who will make that assessment and not a judicial committee of mere humans. So, Galatians 5:19–20 cannot rightly be used to prove that actions included in *aselgeia* can lead to reproof or disfellowshipping. Such an argument is completely nonsensical!

I will also illustrate the issue with the words in 1 Peter 4:3 (NWT13):

When you carried on in acts of brazen conduct (*aselgeia*), unbridled passions (*epithymia*), overdrinking (*oinoflygia*), wild parties (*komos*), drinking bouts (*potos*), and lawless idolatries (*athemitos eidololatria*).

BAGD defines *epithymia* as: “desire for other things,” and it says that the desire can be directed toward good and bad things. The adjective “unbridled” in the expressions “unbridled passions” in NWT13 is an addition that is not found in the Greek text. A good translation of *epithymia* would be “passions” without any qualification.

In verse 2, Peter refers to verse 3 and speaks about the “desires of men.” Interestingly, the last four negative characteristics are included in Paul’s list

in 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 as acts that can lead to disfellowshipping. The first three words, “overdrinking” (*oinoflygias*); “wild parties” (*keōmos*); “drinking bouts” (*potos*), correspond to “drunkard” (*methysos*) in 1 Corinthians 6:10. And “idolatries” corresponds to one who practices and is permeated by idol worship (*eidōlolatrēs*).

The argument regarding Galatians chapter 5 was that because *aselgeia* is listed together with actions that prevent a person from inheriting the Kingdom of God, it must signal offenses that can lead to disfellowshipping. Using a similar argument in 1 Peter 4:3, *aselgeia* and *epithymia* that are listed together with four offenses that can lead to disfellowshipping must also include offenses that can lead to disfellowshipping. But there is one problem, namely that *epithymia* (“passions”) cannot be discerned by humans because only God can read the heart. This word, therefore, is in the same class as *zēlos* (“jealousy”) in Galatians 5:20. So, when *epithymia* does not refer to offenses that can lead to disfellowshipping, there is no need to conclude that *aselgeia* refers to such offenses in 1 Peter 4:3 or any other passage in the Christian Greek Scriptures. Moreover, the core meaning of *aselgeia* is “an extreme desire for excessive indulgence in bodily pleasures.” Thus, the word *aselgeia* is a synonym of *epithymia*, and that may be the reason why they are used together.

If we believe in the Bible alone and not in men, then only when there is ***a clear Scriptural instruction*** showing that an action is designated as a disfellowshipping offense can it then be reckoned as such. What uninspired human beings say is irrelevant.

In the new *Shepherd* book for elders, two different kinds of actions that are included in *aselgeia* are listed:

Unnecessary Association with Disfellowshipped or Disassociated Individuals: Willful, continued, unnecessary association with disfellowshipped or disassociated *nonrelatives* despite repeated counsel would warrant judicial action.

Dating Though Not Scripturally Free to Remarry:

Continuing to date or to pursue a romantic relationship with a person though one or both are not legally or Scripturally free to remarry, doing so despite

repeated counsel and generally after a warning talk to the congregation, would warrant judicial action.—Gal 5:19.¹⁷

The actions mentioned above have no relationship with any part of the semantic field of *aselgeia* as listed in table 5.5. Moreover, *aselgeia* does not refer to actions at all; it refers to the abstract notion of “unrestrained lust.” This means that when a Witness is disfellowshipped based on the actions mentioned above, he or she is disfellowshipped based on a human commandment, introduced by the arbitrary decisions of the GB, and not based on the Bible. Thus, in connection with *aselgeia*, the GB has abandoned the principle of the necessity for “***a clear Scriptural instruction***”!

THE FALLACY OF USING *ASELGEIA* AS A DISFELLOWSHIPPING OFFENSE

- 1) The core meaning of *aselgeia* is abstract.
- 2) In extra-biblical sources, the word can refer to different actions. But these must be specified by the context.
- 3) The exact meaning of *aselgeia* in the Scriptures is unknown.
- 4) Its use, together with *porneia*, could suggest that its core meaning, “an extreme desire for excessive indulgence in bodily pleasures,” relates to sexual pleasures. Thus, the word is abstract, and so does not relate to particular actions.
- 5) The GB has grafted modern actions into the meaning of *aselgeia*, in spite of the fact that *aselgeia* does not refer to any specific actions in the Scriptures, and in spite of the fact that no reference of *aselgeia* in extra-biblical sources has the slightest resemblance to these modern actions conjured up by the GB.

The way the GB has treated *aselgeia*, as described above, is unprecedented in the linguistic literature, as well as in biblical commentaries. It shows an ignorance of the principles and rules of a linguistic treatment of New Testament Greek. But the real problem is that this lack of scholarly knowledge has caused thousands of Witnesses to be unjustly disfellowshipped from their congregations. And, thousands more will be unjustly disfellowshipped in the future if there is no change. As an

17. “*Shepherd The Flock Of God*,” chapter 12, point 17.

elder and a shepherd, I cannot simply witness this abuse of the Scriptures without saying anything.

Thousands of Witnesses have been and will be unjustly disfellowshipped because of the GB's abuse of Biblical passages. To point this out is one of the basic reasons why I wrote this book.

Am I saying that we should just ignore the word *aselgeia*, which may represent “an extreme desire for excessive indulgence in bodily pleasures”? Not at all! However, I simply cannot look the other way at the GB's abusive misuse of the word *aselgeia* to justify its unscriptural list of manmade disfellowshipping offenses. As far as disfellowshipping is concerned, we must look for the wicked personalities mentioned in 1 Corinthians chapter 6. When the extreme behavior involves *porneia* (“sexually immoral intercourse”) or *oinofhygias* (“overdrinking”), and one has become hardened in such a course of wrongdoing, the person can then be disfellowshipped.

However, the GB has decided that “unnecessary association with disfellowshipped or disassociated individuals,” and “dating though not Scripturally free to remarry”— actions that have nothing to do with any definition of *aselgeia* — shall be included in the meaning of the word and liable for disfellowshipping, and this is wrong.

“Continuing to date or to pursue a romantic relationship with a person though one or both are not legally or Scripturally free to remarry,” which is the disfellowshipping offense based on the word rendering “brazen conduct” (*aselgeia*) is a violation of the principles of the Bible. Furthermore, the concepts “dating” and “pursuing a romantic relationship” are not clear-cut and can have different interpretations. And even the concept “Scripturally free to remarry” can be applied too strictly.¹⁸

“Willful, continued, unnecessary association with disfellowshipped or disassociated *nonrelatives*,” which is a disfellowshipping offense related to *aselgeia*, is a commandment that has no basis in the Bible. It is based on the

18. See the article “Dating though not free to remarry” in the category “Brazen conduct.”

view that disfellowshipped and disassociated persons should be shunned, and this is also a commandment that has no basis in the Bible.¹⁹

The word *aselgeia* does not refer to disfellowshipping offenses. And the three disfellowshipping actions based on this Greek word in the *Shepherd* book, chapter 12, point 17, are human commandments, which have no basis in the Bible. The invention of these and other human commandments is a serious violation of Bible principles. And it has led and will lead to great damage and loss for thousands of Witnesses.

A DISCUSSION OF THE WORD AKATHARSIA

The word *akatharsia* is used ten times in the Christian Greek Scriptures, and entries in five Greek-English lexicons are listed in table 5.6.

Table 5.6 Definitions of akatharsia (uncleanness)

Liddell and Scott	<i>Uncleanness, foulness, of a wound or sore, dirt, filth; in a moral sense: depravity; ceremonial impurity.</i>
Moulton and Milligan	No entry.
Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich	<i>Impurity, dire; refuse; in a moral sense of men; immorality, viciousness; practice of every kind of immorality.</i>
DNTT	Refers to the whole realm of uncleanness, ranging from menstruation to moral pollution through wrongdoing.
TDNT	<i>Physical, cultic, and moral impurity.</i>
Grimm	<i>Uncleanness. Physical; moral: lustful, luxurious, profligate living; impure motives.</i>

The concept of “gross uncleanness” has no basis in the Christian Greek Scriptures

The word *akatharsia* is explained in this way by *The Watchtower* of July 15, 2006, page 30:

19. See the articles, “‘Stop keeping company with’ 1 Corinthians 5:11,” “Do not say a Greeting A discussion of 2 John 7-11,” and “A man of the nations, a tax collector.” “As a man of the nations and as a tax collector —shunning or not fraternizing?” in the category “Shunning not based on the Bible.”

Uncleanness (Greek, *a·ka·thar·si'a*) is the broadest of the three terms rendered “fornication,” “uncleanness,” and “loose conduct.” It embraces impurity of any kind—in sexual matters, in speech, in action, and in spiritual relationships. “*Uncleanness*” covers a wide range of serious sins.

As recorded at 2 Corinthians 12:21, Paul refers to those who “formerly sinned but have not repented over their uncleanness and fornication and loose conduct that they have practiced.” Since “*uncleanness*” is listed with “*fornication and loose conduct*,” some forms of uncleanness warrant judicial action. But uncleanness is a broad term that includes things that are not of a judicial nature. Just as a house may be somewhat dirty or completely filthy, uncleanness has degrees. (My italics.)

It is correct as *The Watchtower* says that “it [*akatharsia*] embraces impurity of any kind.” But the words, “‘Uncleanness’ covers a wide range of serious sins,” need some comments. The article refers to 2 Corinthians 12:21 and says that “‘Since ‘uncleanness’ is listed with ‘fornication and loose conduct,’ some forms of uncleanness warrant judicial action.’” There are several logical flaws in this argument.

That two words are mentioned together in the same context does not show that the two words have a similar meaning or a similar function. I have already demonstrated that in the discussion above regarding *aselgeia*. Among the works of the flesh listed in Galatians 5:19–21 are some disfellowshipping offenses, according to 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10. However, Galatians chapter 5 includes in that same listing other works (actions and desires) that are not disfellowshipping offenses. If the argument regarding *akatharsia* above were true, to be consistent, all the works of the flesh would have to be disfellowshipping offenses.

The strangest part of the argument above is the claim that because *akatharsia* is mentioned together with *aselgeia* and *porneia*, which the author views as disfellowshipping offenses, “*some forms of uncleanness* warrant judicial action.” (My italics.) If **all** actions that are included in the word *porneia* are disfellowshipping offenses, then **all** actions included in *akatharsia* also must be disfellowshipping offenses as well, and not only “some forms” of them, that is, if *akatharsia* is even a disfellowshipping offense at all.

The argument about “*some forms of uncleanness*” is to turn the issue on its head. Because the word *akatharsia* can be applied to many things, as shown in table 5.6, unclean actions cannot be defined by *akatharsia*, but *akatharsia* must be defined by unclean actions — uncleanness (*akatharsia*)

is defined by actions specified in the context of a particular Bible account. Romans 1:24 illustrates this. NWT84 says:

Therefore God, in keeping with the desires of their hearts, gave them up to uncleanness (*akatharsia*), that their bodies might be dishonored among them.

Suppose now that we have a Greek manuscript that is broken after the word *akatharsia*, would it then be possible to know the reference of *akatharsia*? Absolutely not. To what *akatharsia* refers can only be understood on the basis of the last clause. The context shows that the dishonoring of the bodies refers to homosexual actions (*porneia*), and the actions mentioned are disfellowshipping offenses. So, the persons can be disfellowshipped, not because of “uncleanness” (*akatharsia*) but because of *porneia*. We may also use Romans 6:19 as an example. NWT84 says:

For even as you presented your members as slaves to uncleanness (*akatharsia*) and lawlessness with lawlessness in view, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness with holiness in view.

In this verse, uncleanness is connected with lawlessness. But because the context does not define *akatharsia*, we cannot know what it refers to. In Matthew 23:27, *akatharsia* refers to things inside a grave, and 1 Thessalonians 2:3 speaks of impure motives. There are six other verses with *akatharsia* (2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 4:19; 5:3; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:7). But in none of these verses is *akatharsia* defined or described in terms of particular actions. So, we cannot know its reference. This means that the “**some forms**” of *akatharsia* that *The Watchtower* claims are disfellowshipping offenses are not mentioned anywhere in the Bible. Therefore, to define these, “**some forms**” will be based on human commandments and not on the Bible.

We have seen that in the Scriptures, *akatharsia* never is defined as a disfellowshipping offense. But in contrast with that, the members of the GB have constructed the terms “**gross uncleanness/uncleanness with greediness**” as disfellowshipping offenses. They claim that different actions that are not mentioned in the Scriptures represent “gross uncleanness/uncleanness with greediness.” Therefore, these actions are disfellowshipping offenses. This is a typical example of the misuse of the Bible, and I will show this in detail below.

The GB has constructed the concepts of “gross uncleanness/uncleanness with greediness” as a basis for disfellowshipping persons. Different actions that are not mentioned in the Scriptures are included in these concepts in the *Shepherd* book. And these actions are defined as disfellowshipping offenses. *But this lacks clear Scriptural instruction.*

Let us take a closer look at the concept of “gross uncleanness” and “uncleanness with greediness.” *The Watchtower* of July 15, 2006, page 30, says:

Paul said, according to Ephesians 4:19, that some individuals had “come to be past all moral sense” and that “they gave themselves over to loose conduct to work uncleanness of every sort with greediness.” Paul thus puts “uncleanness . . . with greediness” in the same category as loose conduct. If a baptized person unrepentantly practices “uncleanness . . . with greediness,” he can be expelled from the congregation on the grounds of gross uncleanness.

The author of this quotation has applied the words of Ephesians 4:19 contrary to the context, and he has read something into the text that is not there. My translation of the verse is as follows:

They have lost all feeling of shame; they gave themselves over to unrestrained lust (*asēlgeia*) so as to practice every kind of uncleanness (*akatharsia*) by exploitation (*pleonexia*).

The important points in the quotation from *The Watchtower* are “*uncleanness...with greediness*” and “*gross uncleanness*.” Both expressions are inventions of the GB and have no basis in Ephesians 4:19 or any passage in the Scriptures.

The last word of the verse is *pleonexia*, and this word is the basis for the invention of “with greediness” in the expression “uncleanness...with greediness” as a disfellowshipping offense. However, this invention is untenable. I have already referred to the marginal note to Ephesians 3:5 in the online NWT13 Study Bible where the English word “greed” is defined as “an insatiable [= impossible to satisfy] desire to have more.”

On pages 242-244 in this book, I show that *pleonexia* never has the meaning “greed” in the Scriptures. In the Septuagint, *pleonexia* has the

meaning “dishonest gain, acquired by exploitation” and 2 Corinthians 9:5 (NWT13) reflects this meaning:

⁵ So I thought it necessary to encourage the brothers to come to you ahead of time and to get your promised bountiful gift ready in advance, so that this might be ready as a generous gift, and not as something extorted (*pleonexia*).

I refer to my detailed study “Greed” in the website category “The eleven disfellowshipping offenses.” The conclusion on the basis of the study of the Hebrew text, the Septuagint, ancient Greek authors, and the ten occurrences in the Scriptures is that *pleonexia* in the Scriptures has the meaning “exploitation.” One definition of “exploitation” is: “the act of using someone [or something] unfairly for your own advantage.”²⁰ This definition of “exploitation” as a rendering of *pleonexia* corroborates the use of the word in some Classical Greek writers, and it also corroborates the use in 2 Corinthians 9:5.

The generous gift Paul mentions in 2 Corinthians 9:5 was not given grudgingly but by the free will of “cheerful givers” (9:7), and Paul did not use the Corinthians unfairly to his own advantage (he did not extort them or exploit them— *pleonexia*). In contrast to this, those mentioned in Ephesians 5:19 had acquired something unfairly to their own advantage (*pleonexia*), and what they had acquired, they used to practice every kind of uncleanness. On the basis of the discussion above, we understand that the expression “uncleanness with greediness” is made up and invented by the GB and has no basis in the Scriptures.

There is also another point corroborating that the words of Ephesians 4:19 cannot be used as a disfellowshipping offense, even *if* *pleonexia* could be translated by “greediness” (which is not possible). That is the pronoun “they” in the first part of verse 19. NWT13 says that “they have gone past all moral sense.” What is the antecedent of “they”? The word “they” refers to the nations (v. 17) and not to the Christians. This alone shows that no part of 4:17 can be applied to the Christians. So even if the rendering of NWT13 of the last part of the verse — “to practice every sort of uncleanness with greediness — were correct, it could not refer to a disfellowshipping offense *for Christians*.

20. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/exploitation>.

THE USE OF GREEK WORDS

CORRECT USE OF GREEK WORDS

porneia (“sexually immoral intercourse”) occurs 25 times in the NT, and it is defined as “sexual intercourse (being one flesh with) a person to whom one is not married, sexual intercourse between unmarried persons, and sexual intercourse between homosexuals.” (Matthew 5:32; 1 Corinthians 7:2, Jude 6, 7) Sexually immoral intercourse is a disfellowshipping offense. (1 Corinthians 6:9; 5:13)

INCORRECT USE OF GREEK WORDS

Aselgeia (“unrestrained lust,” my translation); “loose conduct, NWT84; “brazen conduct,” NWT13) occurs 10 times in the Scriptures. The word has an abstract meaning, and no particular actions can be connected with *aselgeia* in the Scriptures.

Akatharsia (“uncleanness”) occurs 10 times in the Scriptures, and no particular actions can be connected with *akatharsia* in the Scriptures.

The Watchtower claims that “some forms of loose conduct” (*aselgeia*) and “uncleanness” (*akatharsia*) are disfellowshipping offenses. Then, particular actions that are practiced today but were unknown in the first century CE are listed as “loose conduct, brazen conduct” and “uncleanness” in the *Shepherd* book. These actions are defined as disfellowshipping offenses. This is an arbitrary, unscholarly, and wrong use of the Holy Scriptures:

- 1) No passage in the Scriptures shows that “loose conduct” (*aselgeia*) and “uncleanness” (*akatharsia*) are disfellowshipping offenses.
- 2) The word *aselgeia* cannot be clearly defined by its use in the Scriptures, and no particular actions are connected with this word.
- 3) No disfellowshipping action can be connected with the word *akatharsia*, and the concept “gross uncleanness” has no basis in the Scriptures.
- 4) Actions that are done today, but were unknown in the first century CE, are defined as *aselgeia* and *akatharsia*, and persons are

disfellowshipped when they do these actions. This is an anachronistic, unscholarly, and wrong use of Greek words.

To disfellowship persons based on the arbitrary definitions of the GB represents a blatant violation of Bible principles.

A DISCUSSION OF THE WORDS PLEONEKTES/PLEONEXIA

The Greek word *pleonexia*, translated as “greed” is connected with *akatharsia* (“uncleanness”) in the phrase “uncleanness with greediness.” One of the 11 disfellowshipping offenses that are based on the Bible is expressed by the words *pleonektēs* (and *pleonexia*). NWT13 translates the plural form *pleonektēs* with “greedy people,” and all the Bible translations I am familiar with have a similar reading where some form of the word “greed” is used.

When we evaluate a rendering in a Bible translation, sometimes we say that it is a good reading. We may also criticize a rendering, saying that it is inaccurate, misleading, or tendentious. But only rarely will we say that a rendering is just plain wrong.

The word “greed” is defined in the marginal note to Ephesians 3:5 in the online NWT13 as “an insatiable [= impossible to satisfy] desire to have more.” This is a good definition, and it accords with the definition of “greed” in different English lexicons. I have studied the use of *pleonektēs*, *pleonexia*, and *pleonekteō* in the Septuagint, in Classical Greek authors, and all the examples in the Christian Greek Scriptures, and **the conclusion is that the concept of “greed” is nonexistent in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Greek Scriptures.** There is no Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek word with the meaning “an insatiable desire to have more.” Therefore, any use of the word “greed” in the Bible is a wrong translation, even though this meaning is found in most Greek-English lexicons.

I recommend my detailed study of the word “Greed” in the category “The eleven disfellowshipping offenses,” as found on my website. I will give one example that may whet the appetite for this study.

The noun *pleonexia* occurs in Mark 7:22 and Luke 12:15, where the words of Jesus are quoted. Jesus spoke Hebrew, and both Mark and Luke translated the Hebrew words of Jesus into Greek. So, the question is

which Hebrew word did Jesus use that is translated by the Greek word *pleonexia*.

The first important point to keep in mind is that there is no Classical Hebrew word with the meaning “greed” (= “an insatiable desire for more”). Therefore, Jesus did not use a word with the meaning “greed”. A second important point is that the mother tongue of Mark and Luke was also Hebrew, and so Greek was their second language. The quotations in the Christian Greek Scriptures from the Hebrew Scriptures are mostly taken from the Septuagint, and this means that the writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures were heavily influenced by the text of the Septuagint.

The word *pleonexia* occurs in the Septuagint, where it is a translation of the Hebrew word *batsa* ‘with the meaning “dishonest gain” or “dishonest gain acquired by exploitation.” And my mentioned study of the Hebrew and Classical Greek texts supports the view that Jesus used the word *batsa* (“dishonest gain” or “dishonest gain acquired by exploitation”) at Mark 7:22 and Luke 12:15, and so Mark and Luke’s translation of *batsa* with the Greek word *pleonexia* shows that *pleonexia* must have the same meaning of “dishonest gain” or “dishonest gain acquired by exploitation”.

The conclusions reached from my study of the meaning of the mentioned three Greek words are as follows:

The verb *pleonekteō*: “to exploit”

The noun *pleonexia*: “exploited gain”

The noun *pleonektēs*: “exploiter”

Paul used the word *pleonektēs* in his list of disfellowshipping offenses in 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10. In addition to the strong lexical support for the translation of this word as “exploiter,” its meaning also has an advantage over the more common rendering “greedy person.”

The requirement for proof of serious wrongdoing in the Bible is two eyewitnesses, and this is also the requirement in judicial cases of JW, according to the *Shepherd* book. But where can one find two eyewitnesses who can testify that another member of the congregation “has an insatiable desire to have more”— i.e., that he or she “is impossible to satisfy”?

When we look at the ten other disfellowshipping offenses that are based on the Bible, we see that each one consists of concrete actions by

which a person has become permeated. These actions can be seen by others, and so there can be eyewitnesses. But “greed,” as it is defined above, is a state of mind, an inclination, an emotion. It is an abstract characteristic of the mind, and no one can be disfellowshipped for an abstract inclination or emotion.

The concept of “greed” has a prominent place in the disfellowshipping system created by the members of the GB, and their view seem to be that greed can, somehow, be seen by the actions of a person. But that is a fallacious argument because we cannot read the mind of another person. And any interpretation of a person’s actions is based on our own subjective viewpoint.

And what about the two “eyewitnesses” that the Bible requires? What a person can see or witness with their eyes are concrete — observable and measurable — actions done by living persons. But it is impossible to see someone’s “insatiable desire to have more.” Therefore, what happens when a brother or sister is accused of being a greedy person? The committee members make a subjective evaluation of the person and his actions in light of *their personal understanding* of the concept “greed.” But this is a violation of the biblical requirement of two eyewitnesses. So, we must conclude that the abstract notion of “greed” cannot rightly be used as a “disfellowshipping offense.” And yet, as of this writing, “greed” continues to serve as the very foundation basis for many of the disfellowshipping offenses that the GB has invented and introduced since the year 2006.

THE ARBITRARINESS OF THE DISFELLOWSHIPPING LAWS

I have shown in this chapter that there are only 11 disfellowshipping offenses that are based on the Bible, and that there are 37 other disfellowshipping offenses that have been invented and introduced by the Governing Body without any basis in the Bible. Not only are many of these 37 disfellowshipping offenses ambiguous, and Witnesses are disfellowshipped, not because of eyewitnesses, but also, the gut feelings of the members of the judicial committee in many cases, is the deciding factor. I will now show that the meaning of several of the 37 disfellowshipping offenses have changed over time. This means that at one time, Witnesses were disfellowshipped because of a certain action. But at some time later, this action was no longer viewed as a disfellowshipping

offense. And similarly, an action that at one time was not a disfellowshipping offense became so later. I will discuss some examples.

THE DEFINITION OF "ABHORRENT FORMS OF PORNOGRAPHY" HAS CHANGED

I do not defend pornography in any way. But when a person is disfellowshipped for viewing pornography, he or she is disfellowshipped because of a human commandment and not because of what the Bible says. I will elucidate the expression "human commandment." The *Shepherd* book 13.3 says:

An entrenched practice of viewing, perhaps over a considerable period of time, abhorrent forms of pornography would be considered gross uncleanness with greediness and needs to be handled judicially. (Eph. 4:19) Such abhorrent forms of pornography include homosexuality (sex between those of the same gender), group sex, bestiality, sadistic torture, bondage, gang rape, the brutalizing of women, or child pornography. It is equally wrong for a man or woman to watch two women engaged in homosexual activity as it is for man or woman to watch two men engaged in homosexual activity. See 12:14–15.

A letter from the branch office in Norway of June 21, 2006 to all bodies of elders listed the following abhorrent forms of pornography as "gross uncleanness": child pornography, sadistic torture, sadomasochistic sex, gang rape, and the brutalizing of women. The letter continued:

In addition, to view heterosexual oral or anal sex (in a film or on a computer) is clearly uncleanness. But it should not be viewed as "gross uncleanness" that must be handled judicially. But it can lead to the removing from the list of an elder, a ministerial servant, or a pioneer, depending on how often it has occurred and when it last happened. If someone views homosexual oral (or anal) sex or such forms of group sex, it is more serious. But this shall neither be viewed as "gross immortality" that must be handled judicially. However, it is likely that the person will lose his service-privileges in the congregation.²¹

21. I give no other example of arbitrariness: In the book for elders, *Pay Attention to Yourself and to All Your Flock*, published in 1991, the concept "gross uncleanness" was not yet invented. Therefore, "passion-arousing heavy petting" was classified as "loose conduct" (*aselgeia*) and not as "gross uncleanness" (*akatharsia*), as it is in *Shepherd The Flock Of God*, published in 2019.

The quotations show that “arbitrariness” is an accurate description of some of the human commandments of the GB.²² To view homosexual sex or group sex was not defined as “gross uncleanness” in 2006. But in 2019, viewing these forms of pornography is a disfellowshipping offense. This means that disfellowshipping can be haphazardly carried out, depending on the view of the GB at any particular moment, a view that later may change.

The course for elders in 2006 was dubbed “The Porn Course,” because so many talks discussed pornography. At that course, the elders were told that they immediately should take judicial action against persons who had been looking at abhorrent forms of pornography. This was bad advice because many were disfellowshipped for actions they did not even know was classified as disfellowshipping offenses. It is a basic judicial principle that only violations of a law that happen after the law is introduced can be punished. But in 2006, Witnesses were disfellowshipped for actions they had done before the new law was introduced.

The GB evidently realized that the advice given at the course was bad, and the letter of June 21, 2006 said that the new laws did not cover actions that happened before the law was introduced. But that was too late for those who had already been disfellowshipped.

THE DEFINITION OF *PORNEIA* (SEXUALLY IMMORAL INTERCOURSE) HAS CHANGED

A *pornos* is a person who is permeated by sexually immoral intercourse, and *porneia* refers to sexually immoral intercourse. To find the meaning of a word in the Scriptures, the GB uses Greek-English lexicons. But these must be used with caution because they contain meanings and references from Classical Greek, and we cannot know if these meanings and references fit the meanings and references of the Christian Greek Scriptures. Moreover, many Greek-English lexicons also include much theology, i.e., meanings and references are based on different dogmas in the big Christian religions. The only way to find the true meaning and references of a Greek word in the Scriptures is to study the contexts where these words occur.

22. The word “arbitrariness” is defined as “Determined by chance, whim, or impulse, and not by necessity, reason, or principle.” ([https://www.thefreedictionary.com/arbitrariness.](https://www.thefreedictionary.com/arbitrariness))

According to the Scriptures, the word *porneia* refers to only three different actions:

- 1) Sexual intercourse between a married person and one with whom he or she is not married. (Matthew 5:32)
- 2) Sexual intercourse between two unmarried persons. (1 Corinthians 7:1, 2)
- 3) Sexual intercourse between persons of the same sex. (Judas 7)

The list below shows how the GB has added and subtracted meanings to the word *porneia* at different times.

1945	A sexual relationship between two that are not married to each other.
1969	A sexual relationship between a human and an animal is not <i>porneia</i> . But this is a disfellowshipping offense.
1970	The word <i>porneia</i> can possibly include a sexual relationship between homosexual persons.
1972, January	The word <i>porneia</i> does not include a sexual relationship between homosexual persons.
1972 November	The word <i>porneia</i> includes sexual relations between homosexual persons.
1974	Oral sex and anal sex between marriage mates are <i>porneia</i> .
1978	Oral sex and anal sex between marriage mates are not <i>porneia</i> .
1983	The manipulating of another person's genital organs is <i>porneia</i> .
2018	Intimate body contact with the clothes on between persons who are not married to each other is <i>porneia</i> . One example is a lap dance.

Judicial committees have been formed, erratically, on the basis of the GB's ever-shifting views of *porneia* at different times. And Witnesses have been disfellowshipped on the basis of the GB's understanding of *porneia* at any given time. The arbitrary nature of these changes is seen by the fact that at one time, a particular action is viewed as a disfellowshipping

offense. At other times, this same action is not viewed as a disfellowshipping offense.²³

THE DEFINITION OF “PORNEIA-INSIDE-MARRIAGE” HAS CHANGED

An example of problems that the GB created by a new but wrong definition of a Greek word was the view that the word *porneia* could be applied inside marriage, referring to oral and anal copulation, as well as other different “lewd” actions. This view was presented at the end of 1974, as seen in the quotation below.

There are times when lewd practices within the marriage arrangement would provide a basis for a Scriptural divorce. . . .

Thus “fornication” is set forth as the only ground for divorce. In the common Greek in which Jesus’ words are recorded, the term “fornication” is *por nei’a*, which designates all forms of immoral sexual relations, perversions and lewd practices such as might be carried on in a house of prostitution, including oral and anal copulation.

As to Jesus’ statements about divorce, they do not specify with whom the “fornication” or *por nei’a* is practiced. They leave the matter open. That *pornei’a* can rightly be considered as including perversions within the marriage arrangement is seen in that the man who forces his wife to have unnatural sexual relations with him in effect “prostitutes” or “debauches” her. This makes him guilty of *por nei’a*, for the related Greek verb *porneu’o* means “to prostitute, debauch.”

Hence, circumstances could arise that would make lewd practices of a married person toward that one’s marriage mate a Scriptural basis for divorce.²⁴

The view of *porneia*-inside-marriage created a huge number of problems, and so it was retracted at the beginning of 1978.

In the past some comments have appeared in this magazine in connection with certain unusual sex practices, such as oral sex, within marriage and these were equated with gross sexual immorality. On this basis, the conclusion was reached that those engaging in such sex practices were subject to disfellowshipping if unrepentant. The view was taken that it was within the

23. My article, “Sexual immorality” in the category, “The eleven disfellowshipping offenses” has a detailed discussion of *porneia*. It shows that *porneia* means to become “one flesh” with a person to whom one is not married. This shows that the word *porneia* refers to sexually immoral intercourse, and not to sexual immorality in general.

24. *The Watchtower* of November 15, 1974, pages 703, 704.

authority of the congregational elders to investigate and act in a judicial capacity regarding such practices in the conjugal relationship.

*A careful further weighing of this matter, however, convinces us that, **in view of the absence of clear Scriptural instruction**, these are matters for which the married couple themselves must bear the responsibility before God and that these marital intimacies do not come within the province of the congregational elders to attempt to control nor to take disfellowshipping action with such matters as the sole basis. [A footnote shows that Romans 1:24–27 relates only to homosexuals and cannot be used in connection with married couples.] Of course, if any person chooses to approach an elder for counsel he or she may do so and the elder can consider Scriptural principles with such a one, acting as shepherd, but not attempting to, in effect, “police” the marital life of the one inquiring.²⁵ (My italics and emphasis.)*

The important point in the article in *The Watchtower* in 1978 is that every Christian doctrine and every Christian law must have **‘a clear Scriptural basis.’** We see a fine admonition along the same lines in *The Watchtower* of August 1, 1974, page 472.

Holding to the Scriptures, neither minimizing what they say nor reading into them something they do not say, will enable us to keep a balanced view toward disfellowshipped ones.

This is a good principle that I have endeavored to follow throughout this book. This means that the GB should only accept that particular actions are disfellowshipping offenses when there is **‘a clear Scriptural basis,’** and **“not reading into them [the Scriptures] something that they do not say.”** Proverbs 16:11 (NWT13) says: “Honest balances and scales are from Jehovah.” But, as I show in this chapter and in the next, the GB has invented many disfellowshipping offenses that have no basis in the Bible, and they have added meanings to some of the Greek words they use to support the disfellowshipping offenses they have invented, but that, in reality, have no linguistic basis. Thus, they have used inconsistent balances and scales that are not from Jehovah.

While the law of *porneia*-inside marriage was valid, A.D. Schroeder, who was a member of the GB, visited Norway. At that time, there were several problems with the application of this law, and the Bethel overseer asked Schroeder about these problems. The overseer told me that Schroeder became irritated, and he said that he would not hear anything more about

25. *The Watchtower* of February 15, 1978, page 31.

this issue again. A short time after the visit of Schroeder the view was changed. It was evident that the GB was informed of the problems this law created in different countries, and therefore we can say that the GB was forced to retract this law.

However, five years after the reversal of the view of *porneia*-inside-marriage, there was a partial reversal of the reversal. Because of the balanced article of 1978, there was no more meddling and intervention by the elders in the marital life of couples in the congregations. But after the partial reversal of the reversal in 1983, the surveillance and policing of married couples started up again in some congregations. That 1983 article introduced its new view with the disclaimer: “It is not for the elders to pry into the intimate lives of married Christians.” This may have been alluding to what happened after the *porneia*-inside-marriage was introduced in 1974, as well as a warning that this must not happen again.

However, the new instructions in the article from 1983 lay the very foundation for continued prying on married couples. We read:

As already stated, it is not for elders to “police” the private marital matters of couples in the congregation. However, if it becomes known that a member of the congregation is practicing or openly advocating perverted sex relations within the marriage bond, that one certainly would not be irreprehensible, and so would not be acceptable for special privileges, such as serving as an elder, a ministerial servant or a pioneer. Such practice and advocacy could even lead to expulsion from the congregation.

We note the words “if it [perverted sex] becomes known.” There are only two persons who make up a Christian marriage, and “perverted sex” on the part of a husband can only be known if one of them—the wife—reports it to the elders.

And here we have the foundation for the same problems that occurred after the introduction of *porneia*-inside-marriage in 1974. The new focus of 1983 on “shocking and repulsive sexual activities,” including oral and anal sex, would lead some wives in one of two directions, as also was the case in 1974.

In some instances, the conscience of the wife has been stirred up by the GB to the point where she has become hypersensitive about the sexual relations with her husband, and the good relations they had were destroyed. In other instances, the wife used the definitions of “perverted

sex” against the husband as a pretext for getting rid of him. This happened in many instances after 1974.

The conclusion to this section is that the GB has again added one human commandment to the Talmud-like set of laws that is a part of the organization. The basic reason why *porneia*-inside-marriage was discarded according to the 1978-article was **“in view of the absence of clear Scriptural instruction.”** This was still true in 1983. But the GB now ignored this truth and once again intervened in the martial intimacies of the couples in the congregations. The GB has no biblical right to rule that particular kinds of sexual relations between married couples are wrong, and even can lead to disfellowshipping. By this they are on a collision course with God!

THE DEFINITION OF “GAMBLING” HAS CHANGED

The Watchtower of February 1, 1954, page 94, showed that while gambling appeals to selfishness, each Christian must decide whether he or she will take part in gambling or be employed by a gambling enterprise:

Gambling appeals to selfishness and weakens moral fiber; it tempts many into habits of cheating and crookedness... Can a Christian be employed in a gambling enterprise that is legally recognized and allowed? **He may think that he can do so if he refrains from gambling himself or allowing his spiritual brothers to gamble through his services. One may be able to conscientiously do this, while another would not be able to do so in good conscience.** Each one will have to decide individually whether he can or cannot do so conscientiously. It is doubtless preferable to be separate from the atmosphere surrounding such activities, and the Christian may wisely arrange to make a change in his occupation. It is a matter each one must decide for himself and in accord with his circumstances and conscience. **The Watch Tower Society does not decide as to an individual’s employment, as we previously stated in the September 15, 1951, *Watchtower*, page 574.**

However, the book *Questions in Connection with the Service of the Kingdom*, 1961, page 60, which was written for judicial committees, said that gambling was *a form of extortion* and was a disfellowshipping offense. In 1972, gambling was still viewed as a disfellowshipping offense. But the *Watchtower* of October 1, 1972, page 592, said that the definition “extortion” was wrong, and gambling was now defined as *a form of greediness*. Not only has the very definition of gambling changed, but there have also

been different viewpoints regarding which kinds of gambling represent disfellowshipping offenses and which do not. Below are two tables showing the different definitions and viewpoints.²⁶

Table 1.4 Different definitions of gambling

1954	A Witness is allowed to be employed in a gambling enterprise.
1961	A Witness is not allowed to be employed in a gambling enterprise.
1988	Gambling in any form appeals to greed.
1992	Any form of gambling, small or great, is wrong.
1994	To use free tickets for “gambling” is wrong.
1996	Every form of gambling is tainted with greed.
2019	Petty gambling for entertainment is not wrong.
2019	If gambling reveals a course of greediness, that is a disfellowshipping offense.

Figure 1.5 Different viewpoints regarding the nature of gambling

1961	Gambling is a form of extortion,
1970	Gambling is extortion.
1972	Gambling is not extortion but a form of greediness.
1973	Gambling often makes people greedy.
1980	Gambling often leads to or incites greed.
1980	Gambling can lead to cultivating greed.
1988	Gambling in any form appeals to one of the worst qualities in humans —greed.
1994	Gambling reflects greed.
1996	Every form of gambling is tainted by greed.
2019	Petty gambling for entertainment is not greed.

The tables show that in connection with gambling the concept “greed,” that is nonexistent in the Bible, plays an important role.

THE 100+ POTENTIAL DISFELLOWSHIPPING OFFENSES

In this chapter, I have discussed the 11 disfellowshipping offenses that are based on the Bible, and the 35 disfellowshipping offenses in the *Shepherd* book that were invented and introduced by the GB, plus two other recently invented disfellowshipping offenses that are not found in

26. A detailed study of the different viewpoints and definitions of gambling is found in the article “Gambling — changing viewpoints and subjective judgments” in the category “Reversed view of disfellowshipping offenses.”

the *Shepherd* book. One of the two belongs to a group of “100+ potential disfellowshipping offenses.”

The disfellowshipping offense that I have in mind was mentioned in a letter to the elders, dated September 27, 2021.²⁷ The letter was an announcement of a decision made by the GB regarding the view of JW on Covid-19 vaccine. It said that if anyone spoke against this decision in the congregation, he could be viewed as one who was causing divisions, which is a disfellowshipping offense.

The importance of the letter is that the mentioned decision is not a decision based on the Bible. It is a mundane decision that can lead to disfellowshipping if it is not obeyed. This leads us to the source of the 100+ potential disfellowshipping offenses, namely, the book *Aid to Answering Branch Office Correspondence*. This is a book for the branch office committees, and they use this book to answer letters with questions. The book includes about 150 entries, many of which are related to the subjects of the *Shepherd* book. But each subject includes points that have been decided by the GB, and many of these subjects present decisions regarding non-religious and mundane issues. If a Witness does not agree with the decision of the GB in any of these matters, he may be disfellowshipped. That is the reason why I use the expression “100+ potential disfellowshipping offenses.”

TRANSSEXUALISM AND CHANGE OF SEX

I will present one example in connection with the entries “Transsexual” and “Hermaphrodite” in the mentioned book. According to Merriam-Webster, the definition of “transsexual” is:

of, relating to, or being a person whose gender identity is opposite the sex the person had or was identified as having at birth.

NOTE: Transsexual people may or may not undergo surgery and hormone therapy to obtain a physical appearance typical of the gender they identify as.²⁸

27. A discussion of the letter is found in the Appendix of the article “Jehovah’s Discipline — The true regime of disfellowshipping” in the category “Disfellowshipping.”

28. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/transsexual>.

The definition of “Hermaphrodite” is:

A person possessing both male and female reproductive organs, structures, or tissue.²⁹

In connection with human hermaphrodites, the Mayo Clinic had the following comment:

Ambiguous genitalia is a rare condition in which an infant's external genitals don't appear to be clearly either male or female. In a baby with ambiguous genitalia, the genitals may be incompletely developed or the baby may have characteristics of both sexes. The external sex organs may not match the internal sex organs or genetic sex.³⁰

On the basis of these definitions, I will describe what happened in one of the big congregations in Oslo about 10 years ago. A long time before the incident, a child was born, and the medical personnel told the parents that this child was a girl. When the child grew up, he/she felt like a boy, and when he/she reached legal age, an operation was performed, and he was registered by the authorities as a man. This man came in contact with Jehovah’s Witnesses, and he became a member of the congregation. There he met a woman, whom he told about his situation. They fell in love and they married.

After some time, one congregation member asked if this marriage was valid because the man was born as a woman. The question was considered, and all the 17 elders agreed that the marriage was valid. When the circuit overseer visited the congregation, he contacted the branch office, and the answer he got was that the marriage was not valid. But the 17 elders disagreed with him. After this, two members of the Scandinavian branch in Denmark traveled to Norway to have a meeting with the elders, and they demanded that the decision of the GB regarding transsexual persons be followed. And the 17 elders had to accept that, although one resigned as an elder because of this situation. The consequence of this was that the congregation no longer accepted the man as a man, and his marriage was dissolved because two women could not marry each other. What was the view of the GB? *The Watchtower* of

29. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hermaphrodite>.

30. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/ambiguous-genitalia/symptoms-causes/syc-20369273>.

June 15, 1974, page 350, has the article entitled “Born in the wrong body?” and we read:

“Transsexualism” is a word appearing with growing frequency in the news. A transsexual is not merely a transvestite (one who dresses in clothes of the opposite sex), nor necessarily a homosexual (though that may be the case). A transsexual is a person who rejects the sex with which he or she was born and takes up the life of the other sex. Claiming they were, in effect, “born in the wrong body,” many have undergone radical surgery and hormone treatments to attain a sexual transformation. An estimated 1,500 persons in the United States and about 150 in Britain have done so. What really do they accomplish? Is it possible to change a normal person (not a hermaphrodite of ambiguous sex) from one gender to another?

The answer is, No. As Dr. Georges Burou, a French surgeon prominent in the field, says: “I don’t change men into women. I transform male genitals into genitals that have a female aspect. All the rest is in the patient’s mind.” (“Time,” Jan. 21, 1974, p. 64) In reality, the ultimate result is either a severely (and irreversibly) mutilated man who resembles a woman, or a severely (and irreversibly) mutilated woman who resembles a man.

The increase of transsexualism is but one more facet of the spread of practices “contrary to nature” characterizing much of this present period. (Compare Romans 1:26.) The remedy for those with such inclinations is not surgery but a change in outlook, ‘being made new in the force actuating their minds’ with the aid of God’s Word.—Eph. 4:22-24.

The issue in the mentioned situation was that because the man could not prove that he at birth was a hermaphrodite, the GB would not accept that the person was a man and could marry a woman.

The article in *The Watchtower* quoted above is a very bad article.

- 1) It shows that the members of the GB were completely out of touch with medical science in connection with transsexualism.
- 2) Because the Bible does not discuss this subject, the GB has no right to judge persons who are transsexual.
- 3) The Scriptures that are used in the article are twisted.
- 4) By saying that what is wrong is in the mind of the person and not in his or her body and that he or she must repent, they can simply drive a vulnerable person to suicide.³¹

31. I refer to one example of suicide because the way a young man with homosexual feelings was treated by the organization.
<https://youtu.be/CpNBQ1sBTE>

I will not make an in-dept study of the issue of transsexualism. But I will quote the abstract of the article “Brain Sex differences Related to Gender Identity Development: Genes or Hormones?” in *International Journal of Molecular Sciences* (21(6): 2123) from 2020:

The complex process of sexual differentiation is known to be influenced by biological and environmental determinants. The present review has the aim of summarizing the most relevant studies on the biological basis of sexual development, and in particular, it focuses on the impact of sex hormones and genetic background on the development of sexual differentiation and gender identity. The authors conducted a search of published studies on Medline (from January 1948 to December 2019). The evidence suggests that the sexual dimorphic brain could be the anatomical substrate of psychosexual development, on which gonadal hormones may have a shaping role during prenatal and pubertal periods. Additionally, according to several heritability studies, genetic components may have a role, but a promising candidate gene has not been identified. Even though growing evidence underlines the primary role of biological factors on psychosexual development, further studies are necessary to better explain their complex interactions.³²

The article shows that there may be different genetic factors that cause a person who ostensibly is born as a woman to view himself as a man. A “changed outlook” does not change the physical nature of the brain of a transsexual person or the hormones in his body. To say that the remedy for transsexualism is “‘being made new in the force actuating their minds’ with the aid of God’s Word,” is complete and utter nonsense!

When the article in *The Watchtower* uses the expression “change a normal person (not a hermaphrodite of ambiguous sex) from one gender to another,” this may be misunderstood. The quotation from the Mayo Clinic above uses the expression “genetic sex,” and it shows that the “genetic sex” can be different from the external sex organs. The article from *The Journal of Molecular Sciences* confirms this.

The sex organs is only a part, though the important one, of the differences between a man and a woman. There are differences in the genes, the brains are different, and the hormonal makeup is different. When *The Watchtower* speaks about the “change of gender,” it is only taking into account the sex organs. However, a person who is classified

32. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7139786/>.

as a woman on the basis of the sex organs may have all the other invisible “genetic sex” characteristics of a man. Therefore, when it is said that a woman has changed her gender to that of a man, this only relates to what may turn out to be only a female façade, because “she” may have all the other genetic characteristics of a man, and these cannot be changed.

When a man has sexual relations with another man, this is “contrary to nature.” But when a person who is classified as a woman has an operation of the sex organs because “she” feels as a man does, this cannot be dogmatically declared to be “contrary to nature.” It is true that “nature” has given “her” sex organs as a woman, but “nature” has also given “her” the “generic sex” of a man. That this person accepts the personal feelings that are connected with “her” genetic sex and receives an operation of the sex organs to correct the aberration, is a situation that cannot be assessed by outsiders to be contrary to nature.

The biblical decision in this case, is clear. Romans 13:1, 2 says:

Let every person be in subjection to the superior authorities...Therefore, whoever opposes the authority has taken a stand against the arrangement of God.

The only exception to this law is if the authorities ask a Christian to do something that explicitly — not seemingly — violates God’s law. The mentioned member of the congregation had a surgical operation, and after this operation, the Norwegian authorities registered the person as a man. This means that the authorities gave their legal consent for this man to marry a woman. When the branch office as representatives of the GB did not accept that this man was a man and accept his marriage to a woman, they are violating the words of Paul in Romans 13, and they “have taken a stand against the arrangement of God.” Their argument that the change of gender is a practice “contrary to nature” contradicts medical science, as I have shown above. It is the very nature of the person — his genes, his brain, and his hormones — that causes him to feel like a man.³³ And it is self-evident that this is all that a person has to go on in

33. The mentioned situation is different from the legal consent given by the authorities of some nations of same-sex marriages. Such marriages are clearly against the Bible and cannot be accepted by Christians. But the legal consent of the authorities of the marriage of the Witness was based on their acceptance that he was a man who married a woman. It was only the GB who, against the scientific data, did not accept that he was a man.

determining his true genetic self, regardless of the incongruous, sexual anomalies that nature sometimes inflicts upon the human body.

Apart from the scientific side of this issue, we also have the emotional side. Use your empathy and consider what this man has been through. Viewing himself as a boy when he was registered as a girl would create a great number of problems for him while growing up — in school, among friends, and among other people. So, when he became 18 years old, he had reached the age of legal autonomy to attain the goal that he had so long looked forward to — he had the operation and was registered as a fully integrated man. After that, he found the truth of the Bible, and received a wonderful hope for the future. Then he attained a milestone achievement. He met a woman with whom he fell in love and married. And then — when he eventually had become a happy man with a purpose in life — the GB entered the scene and with one authoritarian utterance, destroyed everything!

I have used much space to describe this situation, both because I feel so sorry for this brother because the GB without any biblical authorization destroyed his life and marriage, and because this situation excellently illustrates the possible bad results of the 100+ potential disfellowshipping offenses that are written in the book *Aid to Answering Branch Office Correspondence*. Every one of these potential disfellowshipping offenses is in the offing just lurking to rear its ugly head if given the opportunity. If the man, or one or more of the elders in the congregation, had objected to the decision of the GB, they would have been disfellowshipped because they created divisions in the congregation.

CIVIL SERVICE AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO MILITARY SERVICE

One of the reasons for “disfellowshipping” that was written in the first edition of *Aid to Answering Branch Office Correspondence* (1961), but was not written anywhere else, was accepting civil service instead of military service. I have put the word “disfellowshipping” in quotation marks because the procedural response of the congregation reflected it. If a brother accepted civil service, his publisher’s card was removed from the file of the congregation. This showed that he no longer was viewed as a member of the congregation, and therefore he was, to all intents and purposes, disfellowshipped. He was not shunned, but he had to write a

letter if he wanted to be reinstated.³⁴ What was the sin of the brother? He was disloyal as an ambassador of God's Kingdom because he accepted that the state had the right to put him under compulsory military or alternative civil service. The entries in the *Branch Office Correspondence* where this was discussed were *military service* and *exemption, military service*. I will elucidate this.

Being faithful to the position of being an ambassadors for God's Kingdom

I will now take a look at the situation, and I use Norway as an example. After World War II, all young men 18 years old were called up for military service. The Witnesses refused this service. Then, the young men were offered alternative civil service. But they also refused this kind of service. *The Watchtower* February 1, 1951, page 79, illuminates their decisions:

Being such ministers and preachers, they have not abandoned their neutrality as conscientious objectors and turned aside to engage in military support of this or that side of any worldly conflict. Jesus predicted their neutrality and their preaching activities at this militant time...

To these Christian witnesses the apostle Paul wrote: "He committed the message of the reconciliation to us. We are therefore ambassadors substituting for Christ, as though God were making entreaty through us. As substitutes for Christ we beg: 'Become reconciled to God.'" (2 Cor. 5:19, 20, *NW*) **As "ambassadors substituting for Christ" Jehovah's witnesses have conscientious objection to serving in the military and related establishments of the nations.**

¹⁹ **Ambassadors are exempt from military service in the nation to which their government sends them, especially in a hostile nation.** Remember, in Bible times ambassadors were sent, not to friendly nations, but to nations at war or threatening war. God's ambassadors substituting for Christ are not sent to friendly nations, but to hostile nations. All nations of this world of Satan are hostile to God. The message given these ambassadors to deliver is, "Become reconciled to God." This shows that the nations are not friendly. **How, then, could these ambassadors Scripturally serve in the military forces of such nations or Scripturally consent to do so when required by national law?**

34. A similar procedure was followed if a Witness voted at a political election, see page 216.

To be sure, the Witnesses would not serve as soldiers with the possibility of hurting or killing other people. But the basic reason for refusing military service was that they were ambassadors for God's Kingdom, and they did not accept that the state had any right to put them under compulsory military service. This was also the reason why they refused to do the alternative civil service.

I use the following illustration: A young man gets a fine because the police claim he has broken the law, and if the young man pays the fine, he admits that he is guilty and has broken the law. However, if he does not concur that he is guilty, he will refuse to pay the fine. In that case, he will be taken to court, and the ruling of the court may be that he has to pay the fine. In that case, he has two options. He can pay the fine decided by the court, or he can refuse to pay. If he refuses, the police will either take him to jail or garnish a small amount of money from his salary every month until the fine has been paid. Paying the fine under these circumstances does not represent an admission of guilt in breaking the law, because the court has ruled that he has to pay the fine. It is simply an acknowledgement that he is powerless in relation to the ruling of the court.

The situation is the same in connection with military service. Because the Witnesses took seriously their role of being ambassadors for a foreign nation, God's Kingdom, they could not accept that the state had the right to put them under compulsory service. Therefore, they refused to do military service. And when alternative civil service was offered instead, they also refused this kind of service. This was not because there was something inherently wrong with the civil service tasks themselves from a biblical point of view. But as in the example with the fine, if the Witnesses had accepted the alternative civil service, that would be the equivalent of accepting that the state had the right to put them under compulsory civil service instead of military service. But accepting this would be tantamount to disavowing their role as ambassadors for God's Kingdom and being disloyal to their King Jesus Christ.

What happened to the young Witnesses who refused both to do military service and alternative civil service? In the early 1950s, Witnesses in Norway had to serve 18 months in jail. But after a short time, the authorities made a new law that was designed for the Witnesses. A Witness who refused both military service and alternative civil service was taken to court, and the court ruled that he had to serve 18 months in

forced civil service under the administration of the jail authorities. This meant that he had to serve his sentence doing farm work and forest work.

The situation was different in Denmark, where the authorities had not designed a law for the Witnesses. From the beginning of 1950 and beyond 1978, young Witnesses who refused both military and civil service were jailed for 18 to 22 months.³⁵ And there were a similar situation in many other countries as well. The yearbook of 1991 has an account of Sweden, and on page 167 we read:

After this decision [not to call up Witnesses for duty] was made by parliament, attempts have been made to have us substitute compulsory work for military service. In the early 1970's, a governmental committee was appointed to review the handling of conscientious objectors. For the sake of uniformity, the authorities wanted Jehovah's Witnesses to serve on terms similar to those for other religious groups and do compulsory work as a substitute.

Representatives of the branch office appeared before the committee, explaining that the Witnesses could not accept any substitute for military service whatsoever, no matter how praiseworthy the task. They showed that Jehovah's Witnesses already do a form of social work in their house-to-house ministry, helping people clean up their lives and become decent, law-abiding citizens. Then one of the committee members came up with a most surprising idea.

He wondered if we would agree to engage in that house-to-house ministry on a full-time basis within our own congregations for a period—corresponding to that of compulsory service—and report this to the authorities as a substitute. **The brothers explained that our service to God can never be compulsory or a State affair.** Finally, the committee suggested retaining the 1966 decision, concluding in its final report: “According to the committee’s opinion, there do not exist, at the present, other religious groups in our country that can be compared with Jehovah’s Witnesses.”

The standpoint expressed in *The Watchtower* of 1951 was reiterated and expanded by the Swedish brothers: “the witnesses could not accept any

35. The *Awake!* of January 22, 1978, pages 10-12, has an article about a Witness in Denmark who got a jail sentence because he refused to do military and alternative service. When he was released from prison, he was called up to service again, and he got a new prison sentence for refusing military and alternative service the second time.

substitute for military service whatsoever, no matter how praiseworthy the task.”

Being unfaithful to the position of being an ambassador for God's Kingdom

The words expressed by the Swedish Witnesses in the Yearbook of 1991 are loud and clear, and they express the viewpoint towards military service and alternative service that the Witnesses held for 50 years after World War II. But then it was reversed. An article in *The Watchtower* of May 1, 1996 presented a completely new view of civil service as an alternative to military service. The question to paragraph 16 on page 20 is: “In some lands, what nonmilitary service does Caesar demand of those who do not accept military service?” The answer was in part:

In some places a required civilian service, such as useful work in the community, is regarded as nonmilitary national service. Could a dedicated Christian undertake such service? Here again, a dedicated, baptized Christian would have to make his own decision on the basis of his Bible-trained conscience.

What we see here is a silent Palace revolution. A new king is installed without anyone having noticed. For the past 50 years, accepting alternative civil service was anathema; now *The Watchtower* says that each one's conscience must decide, and there is no explanation why the previous stance should be discarded. The main point of the articles in *The Watchtower* of 1996 is the very opposite of *The Watchtower* of 1951 and the Yearbook of 1991 stated: The state has the right to put its inhabitants under compulsory service, including ambassadors of God's Kingdom, and so Christians can now accept civil service as an alternative for military service if their consciences allow it. This compromises the validity of the position of Jehovah's Witnesses as ambassadors of God's Kingdom.

Who is the new king that was installed? The new king is the Governing Body. The kingly authority of the members of the GB is seen by the fact that they gave themselves the authority to cancel the Christian position of being ambassadors for God's Kingdom, and by this, the King Jesus Christ is put in the background. There are many scriptures in the articles in *The Watchtower* of 1996. But none of them show why the standpoint in

The Watchtower of 1951 and the Yearbook of 1991 was wrong. That is the reason why I use the illustration of a silent Palace revolution.³⁶

But fortunately, the brothers who were jailed for refusing alternative service, did the right thing according to the Bible. But the advice given in *The Watchtower* of 1996 represents a compromise that violates Bible principles.

The consequence of being unfaithful to the position of being an ambassador for God's Kingdom

Jehovah's Witnesses today are like parrots, and they accept everything the GB writes or says without asking any questions. This is required of them, because the letter to all elders of September 1, 1980 says that if someone does not accept one interpretation of the GB, even if he is not being verbally argumentative about it, he is still considered an apostate and should be disfellowshipped. So for most Witnesses, it was easy to accept the conclusions of *The Watchtower* of 1996. But there may have been one group who did not feel this announcement in the 1996 *Watchtower* represented "food at the proper time" — those who had, prior to this "revelation," spent 12 to 14 months in jail because they had refused both military service and alternative civil service. Witnesses were released from jail when two thirds of the sentence were fulfilled. The consequence of the expressions in the 1996 *Watchtower* was that they had spent their time in jail *for nothing*. They had spent the best part of their youth in prison because of wrong advice from the leaders of the JW. Two years after the article that now allowed alternative civil service, the issue of these brothers was raised, and *The Watchtower* of August 15, 1998, page 17, says:

Feelings of Having Suffered Needlessly

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

Was it unrighteous on Jehovah's part to allow him to suffer for rejecting what he now might do without consequences? **Most who have had that**

36. The view of 1996 that Christians can accept compulsory service as an alternative for military service is still valid; see the book *Keep Yourselves in the Love of God*, pages 214, 215.

experience would not think so. Rather, they rejoice that they had the opportunity of demonstrating publicly and clearly that they were determined to be firm on the issue of universal sovereignty. (Compare Job 27:5.) What reason could anyone have to regret having followed his conscience in taking a firm stand for Jehovah? By loyally upholding Christian principles as they understood them or by responding to the proddings of conscience, they proved worthy of Jehovah's friendship. Certainly, it is wise to avoid a course that would disturb one's conscience or that would likely cause others to be stumbled. We can think in this regard of the example that the apostle Paul set.—1 Corinthians 8:12, 13; 10:31-33.

When I read these paragraphs, I got a bad taste in my mouth because the author explains away the real issue and dodges the natural and obvious questions that should have been asked. The author of the article boldly claims that those who accepted a jail sentence rather than accepting alternative civil service, did so because of their conscience. This is in substance correct, but on what was the conscientious decisions of these Witnesses based? On the direct "advice" of the leaders of JW. And this "advice" was really a euphemism for a law because, if a young Witness accepted alternative civil service prior to the change in 1996, he would have been disfellowshipped. You need only read again the strong words of the Swedish leaders of JW in the Yearbook of 1991 quoted above to see that refusing alternative service was, in fact, a law.

So, the discussion in *The Watchtower* of 1998 amounts to a Jedi mind trick to take away the whole responsibility off the leaders of JW and deposit it squarely on the shoulder of each Witness who served his jail term. And then the writer tries to squeeze something good out of what is bad. It is absolutely clear that to spend one's time in jail for 12 to 14 months, for an imagined scriptural reason, is bad. And when this bad situation is caused by wrong "advice,"— actually a mandate under threat of disfellowshipping — from the leaders of JW, this situation becomes even worse. If the view of 1996 is correct, that alternative civil service is acceptable for Christians, then young Witnesses were cheated for 50 years prior thereto. And for the author of that 1998 article to bring faithfulness to Jehovah into that human debacle is another way of cheating the young brothers even more.

*The real consequence of being faithful to the position of being
an ambassador for God's Kingdom*

But there is light at the end of the tunnel. The young brothers who spent many months in jail were, in fact, not cheated for 50 years after World War II, because the basis for their suffering as ambassadors of God's Kingdom, as expressed in *The Watchtower* of 1951 and in the Yearbook of 1991, is the correct understanding, and the present view that was introduced in *The Watchtower* of 1996 is the one that is wrong. This means that the Witnesses who were willing to spend many months in jail, truly were being faithful to Jehovah, and they can be proud that they spent so many months in jail because they wanted to be ambassadors for God's Kingdom.

As I have shown throughout this book, many views of the GB have changed in a zig-zag fashion, and the present views of the GB in many areas are inconsistent. The issue in connection with alternative civil service relates to the Christian position as an ambassador for God's Kingdom. This is a position that the members of the GB say they accept, but their actions show otherwise. *The Watchtower* of November 1, 2002, page 16, says:

Paul described himself and fellow anointed Christians as "ambassadors substituting for Christ, as though God were making entreaty through us." (2 Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 6:20) Since 1914, spirit-anointed Christians can properly be spoken of as ambassadors for God's Kingdom, of which they are "sons." (Matthew 13:38; Philippians 3:20; Revelation 5:9, 10) Further, Jehovah has brought out of the nations "a great crowd" of "other sheep," Christians with an earthly hope, to support the anointed sons in their ambassadorial work. (Revelation 7:9; John 10:16) These "other sheep" can be termed "envoys" of God's Kingdom.

An ambassador and his staff do not meddle in the affairs of the country where they serve. Similarly, Christians remain neutral in the political affairs of the nations of the world. They do not take sides for or against any national, racial, social, or economic group. (Acts 10:34, 35) Rather, they "work what is good toward all." (Galatians 6:10) The neutrality of Jehovah's Witnesses means that no one can honestly reject their message by claiming that they are associated with an opposing side of some racial, national, or tribal division.

Let us now apply the words that "An ambassador and his staff do not meddle in the affairs of the country where they serve." I use the German ambassador to Norway as an example. This ambassador gets a letter from the Norwegian state summoning him to 15 months of military service. What does the ambassador do? He refuses to accept the call or summons.

Then he gets a new letter from the state summoning him for alternative civil service for 15 months. What does the ambassador do? He refuses this **alternative** service as well.

Why does he refuse both military and alternative civil service? Because he is an ambassador, and therefore he does not accept that another country has the right to put him under compulsory service. And this is the simple scriptural situation for young Witnesses. Because they are ambassadors or envoys, they cannot accept that the state has the right to put them under compulsory military service or alternative civil service. This is the only way to act if we take seriously the word “ambassador” in its absolute literal sense! This was the position of JW for 50 years, and this is the only true biblical position. The current viewpoint of the GB, that alternative civil service is an acceptable option, is yet another example of the ever-shifting and often arbitrary decisions of the GB that have no biblical basis.

The present GB has compromised their position as ambassadors of God’s Kingdom. They accept compulsory civil service that a Christian ambassador cannot accept.

Paul and Peter say that we must obey the authorities, pay taxes, and be obedient and respectful. But that does not mean that we must accept all the demands of the authorities of the land. When something contradicts the law of God, we will not accept it. (Acts 5:29) But members of the present GB have diluted the word “ambassador.” And when this word now is used in *The Watchtower*, it has a different meaning from what it did since 1951.

Representatives of the Swedish branch office explained to the Swedish authorities that the Witnesses could not accept any substitute for military service whatsoever, no matter how praiseworthy the task in itself... Their service to God could never be compulsory or a State affair. This is the true biblical position, and so the contrary view of the present GB is a false teaching.

The present edition of the book *Branch Office Correspondence* allows compulsory civil service as an alternative to military service. But previous

editions of the book said that the publisher's card of a Witness who accepted such a service should be removed from the file of the congregation. Therefore, accepting civil service is one of the actions that at one time was, to all intents and purposes, a "disfellowshipping" offense, but that is no longer the case.

The conclusion to this section is that all the disfellowshipping offenses that have been invented and introduced by the GB without any basis in the Bible have ruined the lives of tens of thousands of Witnesses. And the same is true with all the mundane decisions of the GB — these have also ruined countless lives of Witnesses.

THE TRUE REGIME OF DISFELLOWSHIPPING

—REVIEW—

This chapter shows that most of the regime of disfellowshipping among Jehovah's Witnesses have no basis in the Bible and, in fact, violate several Bible principles.

What kind of persons deserve to be disfellowshipped?

The nouns used by Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 in connection with disfellowshipping show that only persons who **at present are permeated** by one or more serious sins deserve to be disfellowshipped. *The mentioned nouns show that no member of the congregation who has committed sins, regardless of how serious they are or how often they have been committed, but who has changed his course and say that he has asked Jehovah to forgive him, can be disfellowshipped from the congregation.*

The rejection of the requirement of two or three eyewitnesses

The *Shepherd* book mentions the requirement of two eyewitnesses. But this requirement has been diluted to the point where it is not used in a great number of judicial cases.

—In one situation strong circumstantial evidence is blatantly presented as an exception to God's requirement of two eyewitnesses.

—Elders have been given the authority to throw a person out of the congregation if they assess that his secular work is wrong.

—Several of the 37 disfellowshipping offenses that are not based on the Bible are ambiguous, and therefore, it is not possible to use eyewitnesses.

—In a great number of cases, the elders make judicial rulings based on their overall impression of all the parts of a situation considered as a whole instead of two eyewitnesses.

The Governing Body has given the elders power over life and death

For a sinner to remain in the congregation, the requirement is that Jehovah has forgiven his sins and not that he has "works that befit repentance." By creating several prerequisites that a sinner must fulfil or else be disfellowshipped, the GB has nullified the real issue — whether or not God has forgiven the sinner — and so the elders have

been put in the place of God by given, in essence, the right to forgive the sins of the sinner or not to forgive.

The right kind of discipline in connection with disfellowshipping

If the instructions of the apostle Paul are taken at face value and followed, a large portion of the power of the GB and the elders would instantly disappear. All the 37 disfellowshipping offenses that have been invented and introduced by the GB would be deleted. Only when there are two eyewitnesses or an unambiguous confession that a person is permeated by one of the 11 disfellowshipping offenses that are based on the Bible, will a judicial committee be formed. The duty of the committee is to disfellowship a person who “is practicing lawlessness” and who “is hardened in wrongdoing” and to reinstate those whose sins Jehovah has forgiven. The application of the subjective assessments of the elders and their gut feelings will no longer occur, and the number of the judicial cases will be greatly reduced to just a few.

The right kind of discipline in connection with sinners inside the congregation

According to James 5:14-20, Christians who were guilty of “a multitude of sins” (verse 20) should not be disfellowshipped. But the elders should help the sinners to change course. The words of James are a recipe of how this help should be given, and they show the great love Jehovah has for all his servants, including those who have committed serious sins.

The bad effect of shunning those who have been disfellowshipped

The Greek word that is used to justify shunning is *synanamignymi*. Its basic meaning is “to mix together,” and its semantic field does not include the meaning “shun.” Its use in 2 Thessalonians 3:14, shows that while other Christians should not fraternize with a person to whom this Greek word is applied, the members of the congregations should treat him as a brother and admonish him, i.e., they should speak with him.

I show that alcoholism is a chronic disease of the brain. But that is not an excuse for misusing alcohol. However, I show that by shunning the person who is misusing alcohol, the GB is depriving the sinner of the best help he can get. I argue that family and friends should support such a person, treat him with respect as a brother and help him to overcome his problem.

A similar help should be given those who have been abusing hard drugs. To quit this habit without the help of a strong and supportive community is extremely difficult. However, for 40 years the GB deprived users of hard drugs of the best help by deciding that using the medicine methadone was a disfellowshipping offense. In 2013, the members of the GB changed their minds, and today the use of methadone is allowed. Family and friends should help and continue to admonish users of hard drugs and all others who have been disfellowshipped, but without fraternizing with them.

Chapter 5 discussed the 11 disfellowshipping offenses that are based on the Bible, and the 37 other disfellowshipping offenses that are made up and invented by the members of the GB. This chapter will discuss the kind of persons that deserve to be disfellowshipped and the very process that leads to disfellowshipping. I will show that most of the instructions regarding disfellowshipping that are found in the *Shepherd* book have no Bible basis, and that these instructions actually violate several Bible principles.

WHAT KIND OF PERSONS DESERVE TO BE DISFELLOWSHIPPED FROM THE CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION?

There are huge problems with the judicial system of JW in relation to the Bible. There are two basic problems in connection with the handling of a serious sin by a judicial committee, 1) the Bible's instructions of which persons deserve to be disfellowshipped are ignored, and 2) the degree of repentance of a person is assessed by the three elders of the judicial committee.

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN **To Do** AND **To BE**

As I have shown above, there are only 11 serious sins that can lead to disfellowshipping when a person is permeated by one of these sins. When the *Shepherd* book lists 46 serious sins that can lead to disfellowshipping, 35 of these are additions to the Bible made by the GB. Not only is the number of sins that can lead to disfellowshipping **too high**, but **the nature** of the sins that can lead to disfellowshipping is greatly misunderstood.

Paul mentions ten serious sins in 1 Corinthians chapters 5 and 6, and because three of these can be subsumed under other sins, there are seven serious sins that are mentioned in these chapters that can lead to disfellowshipping. In order to understand the nature of these sins, below I list 1 Corinthians 6:9 in four different versions of the revised NWT in the following order, English, Norwegian, Danish, and Swedish:

⁹ Or do you not know that unrighteous people will not inherit God's Kingdom? Do not be misled. **Those who are sexually immoral**, idolaters, adulterers, men who submit to homosexual acts, men who practice homosexuality.

⁹ Vet dere ikke at de som gjør urett ikke skal arve Guds rike? Ikke bli villedet. *De som praktiserer seksuell umoral*, [those who are practicing sexual immorality] de som tilber avguder, de som er utro mot ektefellen sin, menn som praktiserer homoseksuelle handlinger [men who are practicing homosexual actions] eller lar seg bruke til dette.

⁹ Er I ikke klar over at uretfærdige mennesker ikke vil komme til at arve Guds rige? Lad jer ikke vildlede. *De der lever et seksuelt umoralsk liv* [those who are living a sexually immoral life], tilbeder afguder eller begår ægteskabsbrud, mænd der lader sig bruge til homoseksuelle handlinger, mænd der lever som homoseksuelle [men who are living as homosexuals].

⁹ Vet ni inte att orättfärdiga människor inte ska ärva Guds rike? Bli inte vilseledda. *De som lever ett sexuellt omoraliskt liv* [those who are living a sexually immoral life], de som tillber avgudar, de som är otrogna mot sin äktenskapspartner, män som utövar homosexualitet [men who are practicing homosexuality]. eller underkastar sig sådant.

The reason why the Scandinavian revised NWT translations show that *pornos* refers to what the persons **are** and not to what they **do**, is that this noun, and the other nouns in 1 Corinthians 5:9, 10, are verbal nouns, i.e., nouns that are derived from verbs and which expresses the meaning of the verbs in a nominal way. For example, the Greek word *alieus* (“fisherman”) comes from the verb *alieuo* (“to fish”) and *hierous* (“priest”) comes from the verb *hierateuo* (“to serve as a priest”). Both *alieus* and *hierous* show what the persons **are** and not what they **do**. The verbal nouns are also *nomen agentis* (“agent nouns”), they refer to a characteristic or occupation.

I will use the two nouns *pleonektēs* (“exploiter”) and *kleptēs* (“thief”) as examples.³⁷ Supporting the view that *pleonektēs* and *kleptēs* are “agent nouns” are their ending *-tēs*. Regarding the ending *-tēs* in Classical Greek, *Wiktionary* says: “ *tēs*: Added to verb stems to form masculine agent nouns.”³⁸ The index in *A Grammar of the New Testament of Other Early Christian Literature* by Blass, Debrunner, Funk, page 299, has the entry, “ *tēs*: *nomina agentis* in 109(8).” Paragraph 109 (8) lists several nouns ending

37. The word *pleonektēs* is almost universally translated by “greedy person” or something similar. In my article “Greed” in the category “The eleven disfellowshipping offenses” I show that this translation is wrong and that there are strong reasons in favor of the word “exploiter.”

38. <https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/-%CF%84%CE%B7%CF%82>.

in *-tēs* and says that “these words...were formed with almost the same facility as verbal forms.” There are also other Greek endings that can form agent nouns from verbs, for example *-tōr* and *-os*. The nouns *loidoros* (“reviler”), *methysos* (“drunkard”), and *pornos* (“sexually immoral person”) have the ending *-os*, which shows that they are “agent nouns” as well.

Our focus has been on the noun *pornos*. Because this is a verbal noun as well as an “agent noun” it does not refer to a person who has been committing *porneia* (“sexually immoral intercourse”) one, two, or three times. But a *pornos* is a person whose personality is permeated by *porneia*, a person “who is living a sexually immoral life.” The revised versions of the NWT confirm that a *pornos* is one who is living a sexually immoral life. The situation of the man in Corinth who was disfellowshipped also confirms that the nine nouns and the substantivized adjective refer to personalities and not to actions.

When Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians, he probably was in Ephesus in Asia minor. There was a long distance between Ephesus and Corinth. The traveler who informed Paul of the man “who has (“living with” NWT13) the wife of his father”(1 Corinthians 5:1) came to Ephesus after a long journey. Paul wrote his letter, and a traveler had to make the same journey back to Corinth. The word “has” is present infinitive, which signifies continued action, and that he was disfellowshipped shows that he still was living a sexually immoral life when the congregation in Corinth received Paul’s letter.

Paul refers to the man with the noun *poneros* (“wicked”) in the sentence: “Remove the wicked (*poneros*) person from among yourselves.” (1 Corinthians 5:13) The word *poneros* is a strong word because it is used with reference to the Devil, and a person does not become “wicked” after he has committed a serious sin one or two times. Thus, the word *poneros* support the view that only persons who are permeated by serious sin should be disfellowshipped.

There is one similarity between *do* and *be*, and that is actions. To be a wicked person, you have to do wicked acts. To *be* a *pornos*, a person has to do so many actions of *porneia* “sexually immoral intercourse” that this becomes a part of his personality. That is why the Norwegian NWT has the rendering (translated into English), “Those who are practicing sexual immorality,” and the Danish and Swedish NWTs has the rendering, “those who are living a sexually immoral life.”

Sixty years ago, the leaders of Jehovah’s Witnesses showed that they understood that only those who were permeated by wicked actions should be disfellowshipped. *The Watchtower* of July 1, 1963, page 411, says:

Therefore, the ones *who are hardened in wrongdoing* are the ones who are disfellowshipped. It is *where serious violations of Jehovah’s righteous requirements have become a practice* that this measure is taken. First John 3:4 states: “Everyone who practices sin is also practicing lawlessness.” So dedicated Christians who become *practicers of lawlessness* in the Christian congregation today are disfellowshipped.

Forty years ago, the Governing Body also showed that they understood the difference between being permeated by a wicked action and doing a wicked action one or a few times. *The Watchtower* of May 1, 1983, page 8, says regarding the word “drunkards” in 1 Corinthians 6:10:

First, it should be noted that there is a difference between being unwittingly overtaken by drinking too much on one occasion and being a drunkard—making it a practice to become intoxicated.

Disfellowshipping a person from the Christian congregation should not often occur because only *wicked persons* should be disfellowshipped — and very few Christians would become “wicked” or “hardened in wrongdoing.”

However, not only have the members of the present GB rejected the view that only persons who “are practicing serious sins” and who “are hardened in wrongdoing” deserve to be disfellowshipped. But they have gone in the very opposite direction. The book for elders “*Shepherd The Flock Of God*”, published in 2019, chapter 16, point 7, says:

Even if this is the individual’s first time before a judicial committee, he must give evidence of genuine repentance if he is to remain in the congregation.

The book “*Shepherd The Flock Of God*”, published in 2010, chapter 7 point 7, expresses the same idea with slightly different words. I became an elder in 1963. From 1965 to 1975, I was a traveling representative of the Watchtower Society, and from 1975 to 2010, I was presiding overseer and coordinator in a big congregation in Oslo. During all these years, the elders in my congregation and elders in other congregations that I knew would never have considered the possibility of disfellowshipping a person who had committed one serious sin for the first time. If someone had expressed

such an idea, we elders would strongly have objected to it. The first time I saw this possibility was in the *Shepherd* book from 2010.

So from 2010 on, the members of the GB have taken their disfellowshipping standard to an extreme. The result has been an explosion of disfellowshipping — around 600,000 Witnesses worldwide have been disfellowshipped from the congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses since the year 2010.

The nouns used by Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 show that:

No member of the congregation who has committed sins, regardless of how serious they are or how often they have been committed, but who has changed his course and say that he has asked Jehovah to forgive him, can be disfellowshipped from the congregation.

THE REJECTION OF THE REQUIREMENT OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES TO PROVE A SERIOUS SIN

This is a very important section because the testimony of two witnesses is ***the proof*** of the practice of serious sins that is the basis for disfellowshipping. When I became a Witness 60 years ago, the scriptural requirement of two or three witnesses was strictly followed. But in the last part of the 20th century and in the 21st century, this requirement has been diluted and abandoned in a great number of situations, and with the blessing of the members of the GB.

In the article “Propriety of Disfellowshipping” in *The Watchtower* of March 1, 1952, page 139, we read:

So first of all a charge must be made, by someone in the congregation or by some interested mature brother, about a person that has gone wrong. But just because a charge is made does not mean that we can disfellowship him. The Scriptures show that witnesses must be brought forth. **No charge can be accepted unless there are two or three witnesses to establish the fact.** That means an investigation. The company servant, the assistant company servant, the Bible study servant, and maybe some other mature brothers in the company should be called together to have a hearing, and those who are charged and the witnesses must be brought in and the matter be discussed. They cannot come to a conclusion that this person should be put out of the congregation on mere rumor or gossip. **There must be two or three eyewitnesses that know such and such a thing occurred or was said.** A

decision cannot be made on guesswork. It may be that by a feeling or a sense that we have we believe the person is not good, but we may not be able to prove it. **As long as we cannot prove it out of the mouth of two or three witnesses, that person cannot rightly be rejected.** Otherwise you may be doing that individual a great harm.

From 1952 on it was possible to apply the requirement of two or three Witnesses consistently because there were few concrete actions that were defined as disfellowshipping offenses. In the book *Questions in Connection with the Service of the Kingdom* (1961) that was written for judicial committees, there are only seven disfellowshipping offenses that are mentioned, and these are concrete actions that could be observed by witnesses. Regarding proof in judicial cases, the *Shepherd* book of 2019 also mentions the same requirement that is found in the Bible. Chapter 12, point 40, says:

(1) Confession: Admission of wrongdoing, either written or oral, may be accepted as conclusive proof without other corroborating evidence. (Josh. 7:19) There must be two witnesses to a confession, and the confession must be clear and unambiguous.

(2) There must be two or three eyewitnesses, not just people repeating hearsay; no action can be taken if there is only one witness. (Deut. 19:15-17; John 8:17; 1 Tim. 5:19, 24, 25)

The quoted words were published in 2019, and they say about the same as the article from 1952. But the problem is that the requirement of two or three witnesses to prove that someone is guilty of a serious sin, to a great extent, has been watered down and often it is not followed.

This situation resembles the situation that Jesus outlined in Matthew 15:3-6:

³ In reply he said to them: “Why do you overstep the commandment of God because of your tradition?⁴ For example, God said, ‘Honor your father and your mother,’ and, ‘Let the one who speaks abusively of his father or mother be put to death.’⁵ But you say, ‘Whoever says to his father or mother: “Whatever I have that could benefit you is a gift dedicated to God,”⁶ he need not honor his father at all.’ So you have made the word of God invalid because of your tradition.

We have the same situation in the congregations today. In this case, what corresponds to “the commandment of God” is the requirement that two eyewitnesses are necessary to establish the guilt of a person. What corresponds to the religious leaders telling the children to give their

gifts to God rather than to their parents is the great number of ambiguous disfellowshipping offenses invented by the GB where eyewitnesses are not possible, and where the elders are instructed to make subjective assessments in cases of concrete biblical disfellowshipping offenses. Because of these inventions and instructions, God's requirement of two witnesses, in a great number of instances, has been made invalid.

There are four areas where the requirement of two or three witnesses is invalidated, 1) In one situation, the GB has blatantly directed that strong circumstantial evidence is to be accepted as proof of serious sin in lieu of the two-witnesses requirement, 2) The elders have been given the power to decide whether the secular work of a Witness can lead to disfellowshipping. 3) A number of the 35 disfellowshipping offenses that were invented and introduced by the GB without any basis in the Bible are ambiguous, and so there cannot be two eyewitnesses, and 4) In a number of judicial cases where the situation was concrete and observable, and thus, could potentially be substantiated by two or three witnesses, the members of the judicial committee have declared a person guilty because "of the overall consideration of all parts of the situation," instead of relying on eyewitnesses.

STRONG CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE INSTEAD OF TWO EYEWITNESSES

There is only one situation where the written instruction is that strong circumstantial evidence for a serious sin can be accepted. The *Shepherd* book chapter 12, point 7 says:

Strong Circumstantial Evidence of Sexual Immorality (*Pornei'a*): If at least two eyewitnesses report that the accused stayed all night in the same house with a person of the opposite sex (or with a known homosexual) under improper circumstances, judicial action may be warranted. (v18.07 p. 32) The elders cannot apply one rule to every case; each situation has unique circumstances. After two elders have thoroughly investigated, the body of elders must use good judgment in discerning whether serious wrongdoing has occurred. If the elders are unsure how to proceed, they should consult with the Service Department.

The reference in the *Shepherd* book is to *The Watchtower* of July 2017, page 32, where we read:

If an unmarried couple spend the night together under improper circumstances, would that constitute a sin meriting judicial action?

Yes, if there are no extenuating circumstances, a judicial committee would be formed on the basis of strong circumstantial evidence of sexual immorality.—1 Cor. 6:18.

The body of elders carefully evaluates each situation to determine whether a judicial committee is warranted. For example: Have the couple been pursuing a romantic relationship? Have they been previously counseled regarding their conduct with each other? What circumstances led to their spending the night together? Did they plan ahead to do so? Did they have a choice in the matter, or were there extenuating circumstances, perhaps an unforeseen occurrence or genuine emergency that left them with no choice but to spend the night together? (Eccl. 9:11) What were the sleeping arrangements? Since each situation is different, there may be other relevant factors that the elders will consider.

After the facts are established, the body of elders will determine whether the couple's conduct warrants judicial action.

It is really strange that the GB in this single situation has given the instruction to the elders that strong circumstantial evidence can be accepted **because this is a direct rejection of the scriptural requirement of two or three eyewitnesses.**³⁹

ELDERS ARE AUTHORIZED TO DISFELLOWSHIP A WITNESS IF THEY DECIDE THAT HIS SECULAR WORK IS WRONG

In connection with disassociation, the *Shepherd* book says:

18.3 (4): Taking a Course That Violates Christian Neutrality: (Isa. 2:4; John 15:17-19: *lvs* pp. 60-63, 244) If he joins a nonneutral organization, he has disassociated himself. If his employment makes him **a clear accomplice in nonneutral activities**, he should generally be allowed **six months** to make an adjustment. If he does not, he has disassociated himself.—See *lvs* pp. 204-206.

12.32: An individual continuing in employment **directly involved with gambling or employment making him a clear accomplice or promoter of gambling** would be subject to judicial action, usually after being allowed **six months** to make the needed adjustments (*lvs* pp. 204-209) In questionable cases, consult the service department.

39. For a detailed discussion of the issue, see my article "Circumstantial evidence for *porneia*" in the category "Different actions."

These quotations show how the GB has given great power over the lives of individual Witnesses to the elders. A part of this power was already given to the elders 55 years ago. *The Kingdom Ministry* of September 1976 had the article “Doing Work with a Good Conscience before God and Men.” On page 1, a basic question is posed:

The principal question is: “Does the work or activity to be performed *in itself* constitute an act condemned by God’s Word? Or, if it does not, is it nevertheless so *directly linked* to such condemned practices that it would make those doing such work actual *accomplices or promoters* of the wrong practice?” In such cases, Christian conscience should surely cause them to reject such employment. (the author’s italics)

The question is important, and the conclusion that ‘if a Christian’s secular work promotes a wrong practice, he should reject such employment’ may be fine in some situations. A Christian would, for example, not have a job where the customers were cheated or a job that included a violation of the laws of the country. But this is a personal decision the Christian must make without any pressure from others.

On page 3, we read:

The congregation’s responsibility

Where a brother engages in employment that clearly violates God’s law, the congregation and its elders rightly become concerned on the matter. Where work or a product thereof is condemned in the Scriptures, or is such as to make one an accomplice or promoter in wrongdoing, the elders should first endeavor to help the person see the wrongness of his course. In such cases **where the connection is definite and evident**, it should be possible to make what the Bible says clear to him and enable him to see why it does indeed apply to him. It may however, take a number of discussions, perhaps over a period of some weeks, to help him see the point and give prayerful consideration to what has been brought to his attention. **If it is definitely established that his employment violates Christian principles and he, nevertheless, insists on continuing in it, he may be disfellowshipped from the congregation.**

The quotation refers to work that makes “one an accomplice or promoter in wrongdoing,” and then it speaks of a situation “where the connection is definite and evident” and it is “definitely established.” So the question naturally arises: How can we know that “the connection is definite and evident,” and is “definitely established”? Who decides that?

The elders are the ones who decide, and this shows the great power that they wield over the lives of individual Witnesses.

We may consider the following example: A brother works at a plant that produces different engine parts. The products are sold to car manufacturers, boat manufacturers, and to manufacturers of other products. The plant also has a contract with the armed forces to deliver engine parts for their military vehicles. Even though deliveries to the different branches of the armed forces only represent a small part of the production, the elders of his congregation can decide, against his will and conscience, that the brother is an “accomplice of nonneutral activities.” Therefore, they discuss the situation with him, and he is given an ultimatum: “You have six months to find a new job. If you, after that time, continue in your old job, this will be evidence that you have voluntarily disassociated yourself from the congregation because you do not want to be one of Jehovah’s Witnesses any longer.”

Let us stop for a moment and carefully think about what actually happened here. Is not the whole situation self-contradictory? For instance, what happens if the brother says: “I do not agree with you that my job constitutes nonneutral activities. The production of engine parts for military vehicles is just a small part of the total production. So, I am not supporting the armed forces through my job any more than a brother who works in a supermarket that sells tobacco and blood pudding would be guilty of promoting those things. Therefore, I will keep my job, and I will continue to be a member of the congregation.” After six months, the brother will not leave the congregation voluntarily, but he will be kicked out of the congregation on the pretext that he has *voluntarily* disassociated himself from the congregation — in 1976, he would have been disfellowshipped. Under no circumstances will the brother be allowed to remain a part of the congregation when the elders have decided that his work makes him an accomplice in nonneutral activities. We have the same situation with a brother who has a job where a part of what is produced is sold to religious organizations, or he has a job where he more directly works for a religious organization or a gambling enterprise.

The biblical requirement is that two eyewitnesses are necessary to prove the guilt of a person. But where are these witnesses in this case? The disfellowshipping or disassociation of a Witness in connection with his work is exclusively based on the subjective assessment of the elders and not on eyewitnesses.

THE AMBIGUOUSNESS OF MANY OF THE 37 NON-BIBLICAL OFFENSES MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE TO FIND EYEWITNESSES

In the next section, I will first discuss one umbrella term, “gross uncleanness/uncleanness with greediness,” under which eight disfellowshipping offenses are subsumed. Then I will discuss one of these eight disfellowshipping offenses “Momentary touching of intimate body parts or caressing of breasts.” I will show that in both cases the situation is vague and ambiguous, and it is hardly possible to find two witnesses that can establish this listed sin.

Gross uncleanness/uncleanness with greediness

In connection with the Greek word *akatharsia* I will repeat some points from the last chapter. The word means “uncleanness,” and it is explained in *The Watchtower* of July 15, 2006, page 30.

Uncleanness (Greek, *a·ka·thar·si'a*) is the broadest of the three terms rendered “fornication,” “uncleanness,” and “loose conduct.” It embraces impurity of any kind—in sexual matters, in speech, in action, and in spiritual relationships. “*Uncleanness*” covers a wide range of serious sins.

As recorded at 2 Corinthians 12:21, Paul refers to those who “formerly sinned but have not repented over their uncleanness and fornication and loose conduct that they have practiced.” *Since “uncleanness” is listed with “fornication and loose conduct,” some forms of uncleanness warrant judicial action.* But uncleanness is a broad term that includes things that are not of a judicial nature. Just as a house may be somewhat dirty or completely filthy, uncleanness has degrees. (My italics.)

The claim that *akatharsia* “covers a wide range of serious sins” is simply not true. Any sin represents something unclean (*akatharsia*), but the word *akatharsia* in itself does not represent any particular serious sin. An attempt to support this claim is the argument “Since “uncleanness” is listed with “fornication and loose conduct,” some forms of uncleanness warrant judicial action (= disfellowshipping). This is a silly argument. In Galatians 5:19, 20 “fornication (“NWT13; “sexual immorality”), uncleanness, and loose conduct (NWT13: “brazen conduct”) are mentioned together with 12 other works of the flesh. If the argument is valid that “some forms of uncleanness warrant judicial action” because the word “uncleanness” is mentioned together with fornication and loose conduct, this must also be the case with the other 12 works of the flesh mentioned there. But that is

not possible, because “hostility, strife, and jealousy,” for example, are abstract notions that cannot warrant judicial action.

And the silliness does not end there. The argument is that only “some forms” of uncleanness warrant disfellowshipping. This means that the authority of the Bible now is transferred to humans because humans (the members of the GB) must decide *which forms* of uncleanness are disfellowshipping offenses. And these forms of uncleanness are said to represent “gross uncleanness.” That such arguments are presented in *The Watchtower* in all seriousness is stunning. It shows the low level of wisdom that the writers of this magazine have in the 21st century.

But there is another aspect of “uncleanness” that also has been constructed by the GB, and that is “uncleanness with greediness.” *The Watchtower* of July 15, 2006, page 30, says:

Paul said, according to Ephesians 4:19, that some individuals had “come to be past all moral sense” and that “they gave themselves over to loose conduct to work uncleanness of every sort with greediness.” Paul thus puts “uncleanness . . . with greediness” in the same category as loose conduct. **If a baptized person unrepentantly practices “uncleanness . . . with greediness,” he can be expelled from the congregation on the grounds of gross uncleanness.**

There are two problems with the arguments in the quotation. The word “greediness” is defined in the margin of the online NWT13 of Ephesians 3:5 as “an insatiable desire to have more.” Such an idea is neither found in the Hebrew Scriptures nor in the Christian Greek Scriptures, and this means that the translation of the Greek word *pleonexia* as “greed” is wrong. A better translation is “exploitation.”⁴⁰ The second problem is that the words in Ephesians 4:19 about “uncleanness” refer to the people of the nations, and therefore they cannot be related to disfellowshipping offenses for Christians, as *The Watchtower* claims. So we realize that both the expressions “gross uncleanness” and “uncleanness with greediness” have no basis in the Bible whatsoever.

However, these two expressions are umbrella terms that serve as the very foundation for the following eight actions that the GB defines as disfellowshipping offenses:

40. For a detailed discussion of *pleonexia* and related words, see my article “Greed” in the category, “The eleven disfellowshipping offenses.”

- 1) Momentary touching of intimate body parts or caressing of breasts.
- 2) Immoral conversations over the telephone or the Internet.
- 3) Viewing abhorrent forms of pornography.
- 4) Use of marijuana, betel nut.
- 5) Misuse of tobacco.
- 6) Abuse of medical, illicit, or addictive drugs.
- 7) Extreme physical uncleanness.
- 8) Oral or anal copulation inside marriage.

That these eight different actions are disfellowshipping offenses according to the Bible is not true. The supposed connection between these actions and the Bible is the GB's own made up and coined expression "gross uncleanness/uncleanness with greediness." The point I have been making is that many of the 37 disfellowshipping offenses that the GB has invented and introduced are ambiguous, and so the requirement of two witnesses to establish a serious sin cannot be applied. This is also the case with most of the eight actions listed above. I will use the first entry as an example.

"Momentary touching of intimate body parts or caressing of breasts"

The following quotation from *The Watchtower* of July 15, 2006, page 30, illustrates the use of the subjective assessment of the elders:

Suppose an engaged couple indulged in passion-arousing heavy petting *on numerous occasions*. The elders might determine that even though these individuals did not manifest a brazen attitude characterizing loose conduct, there was *a measure of greediness* in their conduct. So the elders might take judicial action because *gross uncleanness* was involved. Gross uncleanness might also be appropriate grounds for handling a case involving a person who repeatedly makes sexually explicit telephone calls to another person, especially if he was previously counseled about the matter. (My italics.)

The first problem for the elders is to find out exactly what happened. James 5:14-16 says that if a Christian is spiritually weak and has committed sins, he can call for the elders of the congregation, and they will help him or her to become well. But there is no place in the Christian Greek Scriptures giving the elders the right to ask a Christian questions

about his life in order to find out whether he has sinned; let alone asking the level of intimate details called for in this case.

It is true that the elders are taught not to ask more questions than is absolutely necessary. But in this case, it is necessary to ask lots of questions in order to obtain the details of what happened; how it started, how it progressed, as well as the feelings and emotions of the young ones involved. The two will be interrogated separately. But will they remember exactly what happened? It is possible that they view what happened and how many times it happened somewhat differently. In that case, the elders could get the impression that one or both were hiding the truth and that they, therefore, had a “brazen attitude” and deserved to be disfellowshipped for that.

The second problem is to get the correct understanding of the situation, which is defined by rules that are vague and ambiguous and which can be viewed in different ways. The instruction for the elders is that to disfellowship someone or not may depend on how many times a sin has occurred and whether the person regrets his sin or not. Then the question arises: How many times are represented by the expression *on numerous occasions*? About 30 years ago, there was a course for elders where the handling of judicial cases that could lead to disfellowshipping was discussed in detail. Since that time, the elders have had courses of approximately two days per year. In these courses, the handling of judicial cases has sporadically been mentioned. But there has been no detailed discussion of the handling of such cases. Thus, the elders today are not taught how to handle judicial cases. Therefore, different judicial committees will view the expression “on numerous occasions” differently. One committee will disfellowship a Witness while another committee will not disfellowship, for the exact same actions.

An important point that the committee is instructed to consider is whether the wrong actions are an expression of a *measure of greediness*. I will show below that this phrase is a contradiction in terms. As mentioned, Ephesians 3:5 in the online NWT13 defines greed as “an insatiable desire to have more,” and, of course, it is impossible to have “a measure” of an immeasurable or “insatiable” desire to have more. The word “insatiable” refers to a situation where a person never will be satisfied, and a person cannot have “a measure” of “never will be satisfied.” However, the three elders in the judicial committee will probably consider the person in the

light of what *they* understand “greed” to mean. And for most persons, the concept of “greed” is unclear and ambiguous.

Men and women are naturally attracted to one another. When two persons who are dating kiss each other, emotions are stimulated, and this is, biologically, the first step on the road to sexual relations. So, how can the elders know whether this kissing is a natural expression of affection between the two or whether it represents something more deviant in nature — i.e., a measure of an unnatural, greedy desire for sexual relations? The future of the two is based on the subjective assessment of the elders, and different committees will make different assessments.

The concept *gross uncleanness* is also mentioned. As I already have shown, this is a concept that was made up and introduced by the GB without having any basis in the Bible. But the elders must consider whether the actions of the youngsters represent “gross uncleanness.”

Returning to the issue of the requirement of two witnesses to establish that someone is guilty of serious sin, we can ask: Is it possible to find two witnesses who can testify that the actions of the two young people indicated “a measure of greediness”? Or is it possible to find two witnesses who can say that the wrongdoers were guilty of “gross uncleanness”? The quotation above illustrates that the present members of the GB have rejected the biblical requirement of two witnesses in many situations, and instead, have authorized the three elders on judicial committees to make subjective assessments of elusive and ambiguous concepts that have been invented by the GB. When members of the congregations are disfellowshipped on this basis, they are not disfellowshipped because of Jehovah’s discipline but because of the discipline of the members of the Governing Body.

THE OVERALL CONSIDERATION OF ALL PARTS OF THE SITUATION

The expression in the heading was used by the counsel of Jehovah’s Witnesses, who is himself a Witness and an elder, in the case between the Ski congregation of Jehovah’s Witnesses and Gry Nygård in 2021. The judges in a secular court might make an “overall consideration of all parts of the situation” as a basis for their ruling. But to do that in judicial cases in a congregation will nullify the Bible’s requirement of two eyewitnesses. This was done in the case of Nygård, and it is also done in cases that are based on “gross uncleanness/uncleanness with greediness,

and it is done in a great number of other judicial cases. So it is clear that the requirement of two eyewitnesses to establish guilt is not followed in a great number of judicial cases. The assessment of the elders has taken the place of scripturally required eyewitness testimony.

THE GOVERNING BODY HAS GIVEN THE ELDERS POWER OVER LIFE AND DEATH

The only way of receiving forgiveness for sins is by praying to Jehovah in the name of Jesus Christ. However, on the basis of the instruction by the GB, the elders have taken the place of both Jehovah God and Jesus Christ. I will elucidate that below. The *Shepherd* book, chapter 16, points 6-8 says:

6. In the Bible, two Greek verbs are used in connection with repentance. The first stresses a changed viewpoint or disposition. The second emphasizes a feeling of regret. Therefore, repentance involves a deep regret over a damaged relationship with Jehovah, remorse over the reproach brought upon God's name and people, and sincere longing to come back into Jehovah's favor. It includes a heart-motivated rejection of the bad course as something repugnant, hated. (Rom 12:9) **Such an attitude should be demonstrated by "fruits that befit repentance," making evident to an adequate degree a sinner's claimed repentance.** —Luke 3:8; it-2 pp. 770-777.

7. Judging repentance is not simply a matter of determining **whether the wrongdoer is weak or wicked**. Weakness is not synonymous with repentance. Neither should the judicial committee's decision be determined by the notoriety of the wrong. The judicial committee **should look for clear works of repentance commensurate with the wrongdoing**. (2 Cor. 7:10, 11) **The committee must be convinced** that the wrongdoer has a changed heart condition, that he has zeal to right the wrong, and that he is absolute determined to avoid it in the future. **Even if this is the individual's first time before a judicial committee, he must give evidence of genuine repentance if he is to remain in the congregation.**

8. The extent to which the person deviates from righteousness may be major or minor, **and logically the degree of regret (repentance) ought to be commensurate with the degree of deviation**. Was the individual caught off guard so that he momentarily succumbed to temptation, or did he plan to do wrong? Was he unaware of the gravity of his sin? Did he deliberately ignore counsel or warnings? Was it a single offense, or was it a practice? The more an individual repeats serious sin, the more that one reasonably gives

evidence of being like wicked people who are “practicing what is hurtful.”
— Ps. 28:3.

Most of the instructions in these quotations are human commandments that violate several Bible principles. I will discuss this in detail.

TO REMAIN IN THE CHRISTIAN CONGREGATION, A SINNER NEEDS JEHOVAH’S FORGIVENESS AND NOT “WORKS THAT BEFIT REPENTANCE.”

The members of the present GB have not understood the basic truth that *the only issue* in connection with a Witness who has committed serious sins related to disfellowshipping is whether Jehovah has forgiven these sins. 1. John 1:9 says:

⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous so as to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

No person whose sins Jehovah has forgiven can rightly be disfellowshipped from the congregation, but persons whose sins Jehovah has not forgiven should be disfellowshipped. The GB’s manmade requirement of “works that befit repentance” is irrelevant as far as the question of disfellowshipping is concerned. What does that mean?

The real problem for the elders is that they cannot know whether God has forgiven the sins of a wrongdoer. But there is a simple solution to this problem:

No member of the congregation who has committed sins, regardless of how serious they are or how often they have been committed, but who has changed his course and say that he has asked Jehovah to forgive him, can be disfellowshipped from the congregation.

Why is this important? Because the only way that the elders can know whether Jehovah has forgiven a sinner is to let him continue to be a part of the congregation and see if Jehovah is blessing his efforts to worship him in spirit and truth. If Jehovah blesses him, the elders will have their confirmation that God has, indeed, forgiven his sins. This does not create spiritual anarchy in any way, but it accords with the instruction of Paul that only persons who ‘are practicing lawlessness’ and who ‘are hardened in wrongdoing’ must be disfellowshipped. So, if a person says that he has asked Jehovah to forgive

him but continues to practice lawlessness, he can then rightly be disfellowshipped.

THE GOVERNING BODY HAS AUTHORIZED THE ELDERS TO TAKE THE PLACE OF GOD

Instead of letting God, by his forgiveness or no forgiveness, decide whether a Witness must be disfellowshipped or remain in the congregation, the GB has given the elders the right to decide this. Therefore, the GB has put the elders in the place of God. And so the procedures by which the elders will decide the destiny of the sinners violate several Bible principles.

The wrong stress on repentance rather than on forgiveness of sins

Point 7 in the long quotation above says that in order to regain a good relationship with Jehovah, the sinner must reject the bad course as something repugnant. This is, of course, good advice, and then we read:

Such an attitude should be demonstrated by “fruits that befit repentance,” making evident to an adequate degree a sinner’s claimed repentance.

What the quotation says is a human commandment that nullifies the truth that only God has the right to decide whether a Witness must be disfellowshipped or be allowed to remain in the congregation. I will elucidate that. First, I will discuss the expression, “fruits that befit repentance.”

It is true that to get God’s forgiveness, a person has to repent of his or her sins. But there is no requirement in the Christian Greek Scriptures for a Christian who has erred seriously, but who has prayed to God for forgiveness, to first produce “fruits” or “works” *to prove that*, i.e., as a prerequisite for being granted such forgiveness; the only requirement is to stop doing the serious sin. In Matthew 3:8, John spoke to the Pharisees and Sadducees when he said, “Therefore, produce fruit that befits repentance.” It was not over one particular sin that John was prompted to call for the religious leaders of his day to produce fruits that befit repentance. But John’s words referred to *their whole life course* that needed to change if his baptism was to have the right meaning for them. Similarly, the words of Paul in Acts 26:20 is connected with the message

he preached to unbelieving, unbaptised 'Jews and Gentiles of all the nations'. Paul went preaching that they should repent of their previous ungodly life course and turn to God by doing "works that befit repentance." So, the expression "fruit/works that befit repentance" refers to what persons must do *before* they are baptized as Christians and not to a particular sin, or sins, they might commit after they have been baptized.

If a servant of God had followed the admonitions of John and Paul and had become a Christian, he would have, in so doing, demonstrated or produced the mentioned "fruits/works that befit repentance." If this now baptised Christian were to commit a serious sin, and he had stopped doing this sin, he could, on the basis of Jesus' ransom sacrifice, ask God to forgive his sin. And God does not require the prerequisite of producing "fruits/works that befit repentance" prior to his granting such forgiveness. This requirement by the GB, based on a scriptural expression taken out of context, is a human commandment that has no basis in the Bible.

Moreover, the near impossibility of producing, by the time of the judicial hearing, the required "fruits" or "works" to prove repentance will in a great number of instances lead to disfellowshipping. That is so because the elders may not be able to find any fruits and works because of their strict requirements of what constitutes such fruits. The tragic irony here is that the disfellowshipping of many of these persons will, in itself, prevent the elders from seeing the evidence of what really is important, namely, God's forgiveness. If, on the other hand, these disfellowshipped persons were allowed to remain in the congregation, the elders could, in a short time, see if Jehovah is blessing them, which would serve as evidence of his forgiveness. This means that the up front requirement of "fruits/works that befit repentance" contradicts the basic truth that only God can decide who will be forgiven, and thus, allowed to remain a part of his congregation.

Different degrees of repentance

The GB has introduced several strict requirements in connection with serious sins. One is found in the *Shepherd* book points 7 and 8:

The judicial committee should look for clear works of repentance commensurate with the wrongdoing. (2 Cor. 7:10, 11)...

The extent to which the person deviates from righteousness may be major or minor, and logically the degree of regret (repentance) ought to be commensurate with the degree of deviation.

I cannot see any logic in this claim. The consequences of the serious sins mentioned by Paul are different. If a person gets drunk, he may not hurt anyone physically or materially, and the same is true if two unmarried persons have sexual relations. If a person is extorting or exploiting someone, he may hurt the person materially. Serious sins may also have serious consequences. Adultery, for example, may lead to dissolved marriages and to much suffering for men, women, and children — even to the loss of property and money.

However, I neither find it logical nor biblical that there are *degrees of regret* (repentance). A person who has committed a serious sin may not have anticipated the extent of the negative consequences of his actions. And if his sin has caused much suffering for others, he may be very sorry for that. But a sinner who wants to be a friend of God will regret his sin and repent. But the word “regret” in its biblical sense *exclusively relates to the sin* and not to any consequences or collateral damage resulting from the sin.

To justify the view of “degrees of repentance,” point 7 refers to 2 Corinthians 7:10, 11. But this is a wrong application of the verses. *The Watchtower* of July 1, 1972, page 15, says:

The apostle shows the importance of determining this when he writes: “For sadness in a godly way makes for repentance to salvation that is not to be regretted; but the sadness of the world produces death.” (2 Cor. 7:10) So it is a life-or-death matter that our motive be the right one. Worldly sadness does not stem from faith and love of God and righteousness. It is born of regret due to failure, disappointment, material or social loss, the prospect of undergoing punishment or shame. Worldly sadness mourns the unpleasant consequences wrongdoing brings. But it does not mourn over the unrighteousness itself, or the reproach it brings on God.— Compare Jeremiah 6:13-15, 22-26.

These comments correctly point out that repentance can have two different *qualities*, “sadness in a godly way” and “the sadness of the world.”. But they do not say that there are different degrees of “sadness in a godly way” which means “repentance to salvation.” The word “commensurate” has the meaning, “corresponding in size or degree; proportionate,”⁴¹ and

41. <https://definition.org/define/commensurate/>.

the sentence “the degree of regret (repentance) ought to be commensurate with the degree of deviation.” shows that the GB claims that there are different degrees of “sadness in a godly way.” That the elders should measure the degree of repentance of a sinner is a human viewpoint that finds no support in 2 Corinthians 7: 10, 11 or in any other words in the Bible.

As I already have stressed, whether a Witness who is guilty of serious sins will be disfellowshipped or not is based on whether Jehovah has forgiven the sins of the person. The elders cannot know that, and therefore they must accept the word of any sinner that he has stopped his serious sins and has asked Jehovah for his forgiveness. Only persons who **at present** are “practicing lawlessness” and who “are hardened in sin” can rightly be disfellowshipped.

The wrongdoer himself must prove that his repentance is genuine

There is a basic principle in the jurisprudence of Norway and most other countries: A person is innocent until proven guilty. An accused person must not prove that he is innocent. But the prosecutor must prove that he is guilty. This principle is, of course, valid in the Christian congregations as well. But in connection with judicial cases, the GB has turned this principle on its head because in such cases, the accused person **must prove** that he is “innocent.” Even a person who has committed a serious sin one time may be disfellowshipped. In that connection the *Shepherd* book chapter 16, point 7 says:

Judging repentance is not simply a matter of determining whether the wrongdoer is **weak or wicked**. Weakness is not synonymous with repentance. Neither should the judicial committee’s decision be determined by the notoriety of the wrong. ... Even if this is the individual’s first time before a judicial committee, **he must give evidence of genuine repentance** if he is to remain in the congregation.

The words that a sinner “must give evidence of genuine repentance” violate both the principle that a person must not prove that he is innocent and that every person whose sins Jehovah has forgiven must be allowed to remain in the congregation. Moreover, the difference between “wicked” and “weak” in the quotation also shows the lack of understanding of the members of the GB. Paul shows in 1 Corinthians

5:13 that only *wicked persons* must be disfellowshipped, and this shows that no *weak person* should be disfellowshipped, because they are not wicked. It is true that weakness is not the same as repentance. But as I have stressed several times, it is not the duty of the elders to look for or ‘judge’ repentance, let alone require that the sinner “must give evidence of true repentance.” It is Jehovah who will look for repentance and forgive the sins of the person.

The subjective nature of the committee’s decision

The last sentence of point 7 referred to something that was concrete. The elders required “evidence of genuine repentance,” which must refer to particular works. However, point 7 takes the issue in a different direction. It says:

The committee must be convinced that the wrongdoer has a changed heart condition, that he has zeal to right the wrong, and that he is absolute determined to avoid it in the future. (my italics)

There are several problems with this directive. If the judicial committee has a meeting with the accused person a week after his wrongdoing, there is hardly any time for a wrongdoer who has repented to, in the interim, accumulate “works that befit repentance.” So he may not be able to present any tangible evidence on which to build in order for the elders to be convinced. This also shows that the requirement of such “works” is very problematic.

The sentence from point 7 can also be criticized from two other angles as well. 1) By using the word “convinced” in relation to the elders, the situation is moved from the objective realm to the realm of subjective assessments. This is because some persons are easily convinced, while others are by nature more skeptical. So the quoted words say that the life of a Christian who has committed a serious sin is dependent on the subjective assessments — whether they are convinced or not — of the three elders on the judicial committee. 2) The words of the quotation also place the elders in the position of God. They are now asked to judge whether the sins of the person has been forgiven or not, and if not, they will “hand the person over to Satan” via disfellowshipping. And their basis for playing God with power over life and death are their own subjective assessments!

According to Luke 17:3, 4, Jesus said:

³ Pay attention to yourselves. If your brother commits a sin, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴ Even if he sins seven times a day against you and he comes back to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”

The words of Jesus do not refer to serious sins against the law of God. But the principle expressed by Jesus can be applied to such sins as well. I will apply the GB’s directive in point 7 to the words of Jesus and rewrite these words:

The innocent person **must be convinced** that the wrongdoer has changed his heart condition in order to forgive him.

On which basis could the innocent person be convinced that the sinner had a changed heart condition? The sinner had no “works that befit repentance” as proof of his regret. To the contrary, he continued with his course of sinning seven times. But just the same, Jesus directed that the innocent person must forgive him.

When accounts from the Hebrew Scriptures or the Christian Greek Scriptures are discussed, the present GB often ask, “What can we learn from this account?” And we may ask the same question in connection with Luke 17:4, “What can we learn from the words of Jesus? We can learn three things, 1) The forgiveness of God is far-reaching, 2) Repentance is possible each time a sin is committed without any limit to the number of times a sin can be forgiven, and 3) Being convinced that the person has changed his heart condition in order to forgive him, is not an allowable consideration; Jesus directed that we just accept the sinner’s words on that.

Few elders realize that by following the instructions from the GB in this matter, they have put themselves in the place of God. This is so because they, in reality, decide whether God has forgiven the sins of the wrongdoer or has not forgiven these sins. But only God can forgive sins or refuse to forgive sins, and so the elders have no right to act as if they know when God has forgiven or not forgiven the sin of a person. Because the GB has given the elders the power to decide whether or not a person’s sins are forgiven, the elders have, in effect, been given the power over life and death.

<p>The GB has, in effect, put the elders in the place of God because,</p>

- They are given the task to assess whether a sinner has “works that befit repentance,” which amounts to deciding if the sinner as been forgiven or not.
- Only God can forgive sins, and he does not ask for works of repentance.

The GB has made it hard for sinners to give evidence of repentance by introducing the following human commandments:

- There are different degrees of repentance, and the sinner must show the degree of repentance that is convincing to the elders.
- The sinner must prove that he is innocent (= has the right degree of repentance as determined by the subjective viewpoints of the elders).
- If the three members of the judicial committee for any reason are not convinced (= subjective assessment) that the person has changed his heart condition, he will be disfellowshipped.

I repeat the most important conclusion of the discussion above:

No member of the congregation who has committed sins, regardless of how serious they are or how often they have been committed, but who has changed his course and say that he has asked Jehovah to forgive him, can be disfellowshipped from the congregation.

But if this point is applied to serious sins against the law of God, will that not lead to spiritual anarchy with the saying that “anything goes”? Or put another way: If a person tells the elders that he regrets his serious sin and that he has prayed to Jehovah for forgiveness, why should the elders accept that? They absolutely should accept this because only God who can forgive sins. *Only if the sinner is allowed to remain in the congregation so that the elders can see if God blesses him, can they know that God has forgiven his sins.* But could not the consequence be that the congregation would not be protected from corrupting influences by allowing a sinner to remain in the congregation? If the elders accept the words of the sinner that he has asked Jehovah to forgive him, and Jehovah has not forgiven him, little harm is

done. Jehovah sees everything, and if a person has a wrong heart condition, that will become evident, as Paul says in 1 Timothy 5:24:

²⁴ The sins of some men are publicly known, leading directly to judgment, but those of other men become evident later.

On the other hand, disfellowshipping a Christian who has a right heart condition because the elders are not convinced that he has repented of his wrongdoing is a serious sin. But letting a Christian who has made a serious sin remain in the congregation when he says that he is repentant and has asked for Jehovah's forgiveness will not do much harm. Moreover, as I have shown above, a Witness cannot be disfellowshipped for one or two serious sins. The argument about protecting the congregation from corrupting influences has been greatly overstressed. Each congregation consists of Christians who are imperfect and therefore are sinning all the time. But that does not represent corrupting influences, and sinners have the ransom sacrifice of Jesus. And there is one restraint that prevents the congregation from becoming unclean, as I will show below.

The instruction to the elders in the judicial committee contradicts the words of Paul

The restraint that will prevent a congregation from corrupting influences is expressed by the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 5:13:

¹² For what do I have to do with judging those outside? Do you not judge those inside, ¹³ while God judges those outside? "Remove the wicked person from among yourselves."

The key word here is "wicked," and I have shown above that the nine nouns and the one substantivized adjective in 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 refer to persons who are permeated by one or more serious sins — a *pornos* is, for example, one "who is living a sexually immoral life" (The revised Danish NWT) by practicing illicit intercourse, and not a person who is guilty of sexually immoral intercourse one, two, or three times. To drive home this point, I will again quote the words of *The Watchtower* of July 1, 1963, page 411:

Therefore, the ones *who are hardened in wrongdoing* are the ones who are disfellowshipped. It is *where serious violations of Jehovah's righteous requirements have become a practice* that this measure is taken. First John 3:4 states: "Everyone who practices sin is also practicing lawlessness." So dedicated Christians

who become *practicers of lawlessness* in the Christian congregation today are disfellowshipped.

This is an excellent description of who should be disfellowshipped according to the Christian Greek Scriptures. But unfortunately, the members of the present GB do not any longer agree with the wise words in the quotation above: I bring one more time the quotation from the *Shepherd* book chapter 16, point 7 says:

Judging repentance is not simply a matter of determining whether the wrongdoer is weak or wicked... *Even if this is the individual's first time before a judicial committee, he must give evidence of genuine repentance* if he is to remain in the congregation.

As I have shown above, the contrast mentioned between “weak” and “wicked” in the quotation is interesting because it is so wrong. Because Paul says that only wicked persons must be disfellowshipped, it means, contrary to the *Shepherd* book, that if a sinner is weak and not wicked *he should not be disfellowshipped*. No Christian who is not wicked deserves to be disfellowshipped.

The instruction that even a Christian who commits a serious sin for the first time can be disfellowshipped is extreme, and it clearly contradicts the meaning of the nouns that Paul used in 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10. These nouns show that only Christians who *are living* as sexually immoral persons, as drunkards, as thieves, and etc. deserve to be disfellowshipped. The instruction that one-time sinners can be disfellowshipped is the same as saying that Paul's instructions are wrong, thus taking away a part of the Holy Bible.

What has been discussed is the constraint found in the Christian Greek Scriptures that will prevent corrupting influences in the congregation. The constraint is that Christians who “are hardened in wrongdoing” must be disfellowshipped from the congregation. And by this, the congregation will be kept clean. As mentioned, the contrast between the person who is permeated by a serious sin and a person who one or several times committed a serious sin is no longer accepted by the GB. As a matter of fact, the treatment of sinners among JW today is by several orders of magnitude stricter than it was in 1963 and for a large portion of the 20th century.

Only Christians who are “hardened in wrongdoing” (*The Watchtower* of July 1, 1963) and are “wicked” (1 Corinthians 5:13) deserve to be disfellowshipped from the congregation. The instruction of the GB that a Christian who has committed a single serious sin and who does not show the degree of regret that the elders expect will be disfellowshipped is a blatant violation of the Holy Scriptures. This instruction is an expression of extremism, and flies in the face of Jehovah’s love and mercy.

APPLYING THE RIGHT KIND OF DISCIPLINE

The two sections that follow are very important. They show how the situation would be in the Christian congregations if Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians chapters 5 and 6 were followed and where only those who are “practicing lawlessness” and are “hardened in wrongdoing” are disfellowshipped. It also shows how the elders can help Witnesses who have committed serious sins one or several times but are not “hardened in wrongdoing” to regain their good relationship with Jehovah.

THE RIGHT KIND OF DISCIPLINE IN CONNECTION WITH DISFELLOWSHIPPING

The application of Jehovah’s discipline in connection with disfellowshipping means that only on the basis of the 11 disfellowshipping offenses that are mentioned in the Bible, can a person rightly be disfellowshipped. And further, it means that only persons who are permeated by one of these disfellowshipping offenses, such as the man in Corinth, who for several months was living a sexually immoral life by having a relationship with his father’s wife, will be disfellowshipped.

This system will also preclude the elders from getting embroiled in situations where they must play God and decide whether Jehovah has forgiven a serious sin of a person or not. How so? Today, the situation is that if a member of the congregation, for example, is guilty of sexual immorality, he must appear before a judicial committee. Only when the elders of the committee “are convinced” that he has repented of his sin to the degree that they require will he be allowed to remain in the

congregation. If they are not convinced that he has repented, he will be disfellowshipped.

Please note that the real issue is whether the sinner has prayed to Jehovah and has received his forgiveness. In that case, it would be against Jehovah's will to disfellowship the person. The problem for the elders is that they cannot know whether Jehovah has forgiven the sinner. So, the GB has introduced a human test system where the sinner must face the crucible of a judicial committee in order to prove that he has repented. It is not enough for the elders that the sinner says he has stopped his serious sin and has asked Jehovah to forgive him. The elders require in addition that he has produced "works that befit repentance" as proof that he has repented. As I have shown above, these requirements have no basis in the Bible and are, in reality, against Bible principles.

In the system set forth by the apostle Paul, the elders need not consider whether a Witness has repented or not. Most of the subjective assessments in the present system would be nonexistent, and only concrete evidence would be considered. The reason for this is that only when there are two witnesses or a clear and unambiguous confession that a person is permeated by a serious sin, can a judicial committee be formed. And the duty of this committee would be to disfellowship only those persons who are hardened in wrongdoing.

On this background, and in view of the fact that the real issue is whether Jehovah has forgiven the sinner, the elders should, in every case where the sinner says that he has changed his course and prayed to Jehovah to forgive him, accept that — he will not be disfellowshipped. This is the only way the elders can know whether Jehovah has forgiven him. If the person continues in the congregation in the right way, they will see Jehovah's blessing, and that will be their confirmation that Jehovah has forgiven him. If he returns to his sinful course and "practice lawlessness," the elders will know that Jehovah has not forgiven him, and they will at that point disfellowship him.

So, the duty of the committee members is not to scrutinize or question repentance. Rather, their duty is to disfellowship a Witness who is hardened in wrongdoing and has, thus, become a practicer of serious sin. Still, even in such cases, there remains a possibility or opportunity for repentance, as I have shown. If a Witness has practiced a serious sin for a long time; for example, he has regularly had sexual relations with a

woman with whom he is not married; then a judicial committee must be formed. But when he is invited to the judicial meeting, he realizes his situation, changes his life, and asks Jehovah for his forgiveness; what then?

Only God can forgive sins and not the elders, and so their subjective gut feelings about that private matter between Jehovah and the wrongdoer is irrelevant — it is simply not up to them to be convinced or not convinced that the sin of a person has been forgiven. And it is impossible for the elders to know what Jehovah has decided in this regard. This means that if a congregation member who has practiced sin for some time tells the elders that he has stopped his sinful actions, has repented, and asked Jehovah for his forgiveness, the elders have no other recourse but to take him at his word and not disfellowship him. There is no biblical requirement that he must have or produce at the judicial hearing “works that befit repentance.” But it is enough that he has one “work” — he has stopped with his sinful actions.

As I have shown above, that would not mean that the elders would allow a corrupting influence to remain in the congregation. Not at all! We can think of King Manasseh, who was guilty of more wicked actions than most other persons. But when he repented, he was forgiven by Jehovah in that moment. And we must again think of the words of Jesus at Luke 17:3, 4, that I also discussed above:

³ Pay attention to yourselves. If your brother commits a sin, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. ⁴ Even if he sins seven times a day against you and he comes back to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”

The principle in Jesus’ words can be applied to all situations where a person practices sin. And most important: The Bible does not give the elders the right to question the words of a Christian who says that he has repented of his sins and asked Jehovah to forgive him. The scenarios that I have described above are not situations that I have conjured up calling for a weakening of Jehovah’s laws and principles, situations where these laws and principles are diluted. But these are situations that are based on the words of the apostle Paul that only persons who are permeated with serious sins and continues to practice these sins must be disfellowshipped. These are also situations that are based on the words of *The Watchtower* of July 1, 1963 that only those who are “hardened in

wrongdoing” who are “practicers of lawlessness” must be disfellowshipped.

The important and noteworthy consequence of “Jehovah’s discipline” practiced in the biblical way, is that a significant portion of the power of the members of the GB and the elders are taken away. To be sure, if all the 37 disfellowshipping offenses that are not based on the Bible, but that have been invented by the GB, which is 77% of all such offenses, were discarded, a large portion of the power of the GB would instantly disappear. As for the elders, their ultimate power over the life and death of fellow Christians that the GB has given them, would also be taken away. The elders would no longer even consider, let alone decide, whether a Witness has a job that he must change under the threat of disfellowshipping; they would no longer consider the moral behavior of a great number of Witnesses in the light of the unclear and ambiguous laws of disfellowshipping that have been invented by the GB; they would no longer consider and decide whether a Witness who is guilty of a serious sin has actually repented or not; they would no longer make subjective assessments in a number of situations deciding whether a Witness must be disfellowshipped or not; and the number of judicial cases would be greatly reduced to just a few. The only scriptural assessments the elders would be required to make is whether there is proof that a Witness has been hardened in wrongdoing, and so must be disfellowshipped, and whether a person who has been disfellowshipped can be reinstated.

THE RIGHT KIND OF DISCIPLINE IN CONNECTION WITH SINNERS INSIDE THE CONGREGATION

When Witnesses who have committed “a multitude of sins,” according to James 5:19-20, are not thrown out of the congregation, the consequence will not be that the congregations will have a number of persons who represent a corrupting influence, as I have shown above.

To illustrate the issue, I will use the following example: What will a Christian father and mother do if their young son misuses alcohol and becomes drunk several times, or they get a report that he has been shoplifting several times. Will they throw him out of the home? Certainly not. They realize that he has a problem, and as good parents they will try to help him with his problem. They will go to extreme lengths to help

him, also when there are several relapses. And only when they are absolutely convinced that there is no hope that he will ever change his behavior and they feel that he is destroying the family, will they require him to leave the home.

What will Jehovah do with his dear children, persons who have dedicated their lives to him and have served him faithfully, if they deviate from his standards and have committed serious sins? Will he follow the example of the parents? What is “Jehovah’s discipline” and justice in such a situation? We find the answer in the words of James in 5:14-20.

¹⁴ Is there anyone sick (*astheneō*) among you? Let him call the elders of the congregation to him, and let them pray over him, applying oil to him in the name of Jehovah. ¹⁵ And the prayer of faith will make the sick (*kamnoō*) one well (*sōzōō*), and Jehovah will raise him up. Also, if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore, openly confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed (*iaomai*). A righteous man’s supplication has a powerful effect. ¹⁷ E·li’jah was a man with feelings like ours, and yet when he prayed earnestly for it not to rain, it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. ¹⁸ Then he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain and the land produced fruit. ¹⁹ My brothers, if anyone among you is led astray from the truth and another turns him back, ²⁰ know that whoever turns a sinner back from the error of his way will save him from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

I will analyze the words of James. The Greek word *astheneō* in verse 14 that is translated as “sick,” has according to Louw and Nida the meaning “to be sick; to be in a state of incapacity or weakness.” Please look at the two passages below:

2 Corinthians 13:9

⁹ We certainly rejoice whenever we are weak (*astheneō*) but you are powerful. And this is what we are praying for, your being.

2 Corinthians 12:10

¹⁰ So I take pleasure in weaknesses (*astheneia*), in insults, in times of need, in persecutions and difficulties, for Christ. For when I am weak (*astheneō*), then I am powerful.

The verb *astheneō* occurs 32 times in the Christian Greek Scriptures. In most cases, it refers to sickness, but in 2 Corinthians 12:10 and 13:9, it refers to being weak. In 12:10, the noun “weakness” is found in addition.

James also uses the verb *kamnō* in 5:15. According to Louw and Nida, the meaning of *kamnō* is “to be ill, with a possible implication of being worn-out or wasting away,” and Mounce has the meaning “to tire with exertion, labor to weariness.” The form is nominal (present active participle masculine singular), and NWT13 translates the word as “the sick one,” but it could have been translated as “the weak one.”

James has used two verbs that both can refer to being sick, being weak, and being weary.

Verse 15 has the verb (*sōzō*), which may throw some light on the issue. According to Louw and Nida, the verb *sōzō* means “to rescue from danger and to restore to a former state of safety and well-being; to cause someone to experience divine salvation.” According to Mounce, the meaning is “to save, rescue; to preserve safe and unharmed.” The verb *sōzō* occurs 99 times in the Christian Greek Scriptures, and in most instances, the meaning is “to save” in the religious sense of the word. James uses the word in 1:21; 2:14; 4:12; 5:20 in this sense, and therefore it is likely that it also has the sense of “save” in 5:15.

In verse 16, the verb *iaomai* is used. NWT13 translates it as “may be healed.” According to Louw and Nida, the meaning is: “to cause someone to become well again after having been sick,” and Mounce has the meaning: “to heal, cure, Mt. 8:8; Lk. 9:2; met. to heal, spiritually, restore from a state of sin and condemnation.” The verb is used 26 times in the Christian Greek Scriptures, both regarding literal and spiritual healing.

Because James used the verb *sōzō* four times with the religious meaning of “save,” it is logical that he also used this meaning in 5:15, with reference to what prayers will do. This means that the first clause in verse 14 with the verb *astheneō* may be translated as, “Is there anyone weak among you?” instead of “Is there anyone sick among you?” And the middle clause in verse 16 with the verb *iaomai* is better translated as, “that you may be restored” rather than “that you may be healed.” The issue James is discussing is the restoration to a saved condition of a Christian who has become spiritually weak or worn down.

There can be different reasons why a Christian becomes weak, including the committing of sins. James exhorts the Christians to “openly confess your sins to one another.” If a weak Christian had confessed his sins to the elders, what would they do? Would they say, “Have you repented of your sins?” and “Do you have works that befit repentance?”

They would not ask such questions, and they would not open an investigation or official hearing to determine whether he had regretted his sins or not, and whether they could allow him to remain in the congregation. But they would pray for him, knowing that “a righteous man’s supplication has a powerful effect.” They cannot forgive his sins, but they trust that when this man comes to them and asks for help and confesses his sins to them, Jehovah will forgive him — just as James 5:15 assuredly says he will.

James does not specify which kind of sins he had in mind. However, all Christians are sinning every day, and they pray to Jehovah and ask for his forgiveness. There are several reasons to think that James had more serious sins in mind. One reason is that Christians would not be confessing minor sins to the elders. Another reason is that the weak Christian did not have the conviction to pray to Jehovah himself for forgiveness; he needed help from the elders so they could pray for him. A third reason is the use of the Greek word “to save” (*sōzō*) that evidently is used in the religious sense of gaining salvation. Minor sins would not have to do with a person’s salvation, but serious sins could prevent one’s salvation.

Supporting the view that James had serious sins in mind are the words in verses 19 and 20:

¹⁹My brothers, if anyone among you is led astray from the truth and another turns him back,²⁰ know that whoever turns a sinner back from the error of his way will save him from death and will cover a multitude of sins.

These two verses are the conclusion of the discussion that starts in verse 14. And there is one word that connects verse 20 with verse 15 in showing what prayer can do, and that is *sōzō* (“to save”). Verse 15 says the prayer of faith (or, “in faith”) will save (*sōzō*) the weak one (*kamno*). The one who will be saved according to verse 15 is “the weak one,” and the one who is saved according to verse 20 is “him.” What is the antecedent of “him”? It is “a sinner.” And what is the sin of the sinner? Verse 19 says that the sinner “has gone astray from the truth,” and verse 20 speaks of “the error of his way.”

The verb *planaō* that is translated as “go astray,” has the meaning “to no longer believe what is true, but to start believing what is false” according to Louw and Nida, and “lead astray; mislead; deceive” and passive: “go astray,” according to Mounce. James uses *planaō* in 1:16 with

the sense “mislead, lead astray,” and in 1 John 2:26 and 3:7, the word is used with the same meaning. This shows that to be guilty of *planaō* is a serious sin. In verse 20, the corresponding noun *planē* is used, and it is translated as “the error (of his way)” by NWT13. The meaning of the noun is a “behavior which deviates seriously from that which is morally correct,” according to Louw and Nida. That the error that is expressed by *planē* is serious is seen by the following passages (NIV):

Ephesians 4:14

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful (*plane*) scheming.

2 Thessalonians 2:11

For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion (*plane*) so that they will believe the lie.

1 John 4:6

We are from God, and whoever knows God listens to us; but whoever is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we recognize the Spirit of truth and the spirit of falsehood (*plane*).

It is clear that the sins that are mentioned in James 5:19, 20 are serious sins. The goal in verse 20 is that a Christian can *save* the sinner that is mentioned, and the goal in verse 15 is that the prayer in faith by the elders might *save* the sinner. The similarities in the situation where a sinner called the elders to help him (verses 13-16) and in the situation where the elders were not called (verses 19, 20) are that both persons were in the middle of practicing sin. In the last situation, the sins were serious, and that was probably the case in the first situation as well because a person will not call for the elders in connection with minor sins.

If the situation that is mentioned in verses 19, 20 had occurred today, the person would not have been helped, but he would have most certainly been disfellowshipped, even if he had changed course immediately before the judicial hearing. But the focus of James was to help the person and not to throw him out of the congregation. This means that the words of James represent instructions on how the elders can help all members of the congregation who have practiced “a multitude of sins” but have changed course, regardless of the nature of the sins or how long they

have been practiced. Only persons who still are practicing lawlessness and who have been hardened in a course of sin must be disfellowshipped. All others should be helped to regain a good relationship with Jehovah. And as James said: “whoever turns a sinner back from the error of his way will save him from death and will cover a multitude of sins.”

The words of James reflect the great love the Christian couple that I used as an example showed for their son. When he committed several sins that were serious, they did not ask him to leave the home from the outset. But they did all they could to help him. Only after there no longer was any hope that he would accept the help and repent, did the parents consider requiring him to leave home. The words of James show that the Christian congregation should act in a similar way with serious wrongdoers.

The main point of this study has been:

No member of the congregation who has committed sins, regardless of how serious they are or how often they have been committed, but who has changed his course and say that he has asked Jehovah to forgive him, can be disfellowshipped from the congregation.

The words of James are a “recipe” showing how the elders should care for those who are mentioned in the quotation above. A member of the congregation who has committed a “multitude of sins” does not have to be disfellowshipped but can remain in the congregation. The elders and the members of the congregation should do all they can to help him, time and time again. Only after it becomes clear that there no longer is any hope of repentance, but the person has become “hardened in wrongdoing” and is “practicing lawlessness,” must he be disfellowshipped from the congregation.

THE BAD EFFECT OF SHUNNING THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN DISFELLOWSHIPPED

I have demonstrated that shunning is a human commandment that has no basis in the Bible.⁴² That a person who has been disfellowshipped, and therefore, will be shunned by all except the family that is living in his house, is more like the extreme Sharia laws of the Muslims than anything

42. See the three articles in the category, “Shunning not based on the Bible.”

else that I know of. The word *sharia* means “the path” or “a road that leads to water,” and it refers to a set of principles that govern the moral lives of Muslims. And the Sharia law may be extreme, with the cutting off of the hands of thieves and stoning opponents of the law.

Christians today cannot kill others, but disfellowshipping is the same as “killing” a person because he has no longer any hope of everlasting life, according to the GB. The purpose of disfellowshipping is to lead the sinner on the right path, according to the instructions, so he can repent and return to the congregation. If that happens, he is no longer “dead.” But to achieve this, **force** (the GB’s version of disfellowshipping, i.e., shunning) is used, exactly as in the Sharia law, However, Paul said that it was **God’s kindness** that would lead to repentance and not the use of force (Romans 2:4).

AN ANALYSIS OF 2 THESSALONIANS 3:14

The Greek word that is used to justify shunning is *synanamignymi*, and it occurs only three times in the Christian Greek Scriptures. (1 Corinthians 5:9; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:14.) According to Louw and Nida, the meaning of the words is:

To associate with one another, normally involving spacial proximity and/or joint activity, and usually implying some kind of reciprocal relation or involvement — ‘to associate, to be in the company of, to be involved with, association.’

The definition of the word does not justify JW’s extreme behavior of shunning disfellowshipped persons. So when the GB uses 1 Corinthians 5:9 and 6:11, where the word *synanamignymi* occurs, to justify shunning, they are twisting the Greek word and misleading the readers. I will elucidate this by discussing 2 Thessalonians 3:14 where the word also occurs.

What would be the error of the man that is mentioned? Paul said that he would not be “obedient to our word through this letter.” (NWT13) What would happen to such a person today? A letter from Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of New York Inc. to all circuit and district overseers, dated September 1, 1980 says:

If a baptized Christian abandons the teachings of Jehovah, as presented by the faithful and discreet slave, and persist in believing other doctrine despite

reproof, then he is apostatizing...then appropriate judicial action should be taken.

The contents of the literature published by The Watchtower Society is called “the teachings of Jehovah,” and a Witness who does not accept one such teaching must be disfellowshipped (= “appropriate judicial action should be taken”). This instruction contradicts Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians chapters 5 and 6, where he shows that only persons who are permeated by one of seven particular actions mentioned should be disfellowshipped. Disagreements with the leaders, which is called “causing divisions” in the *Shepherd* book, is not a disfellowshipping offense according to the Christian Greek Scriptures.

The man that is mentioned in 2 Thessalonians 3:14 evidently would not be disfellowshipped back in the first century, but NWT13 says, “keep this one marked (*sēmeioomai*) and stop associating (*synanamignymi*) with him.” The meaning of the word *sēmeioomai* is “to pay special attention to something for the sake of a future recall and response” according to Louw and Nida, and “to mark, inscribe marks upon; mid. to mark for one’s self” according to Mounce Greek Dictionary. The verb is present medium imperative, and a medium form (mid.) may have a reflexive meaning as “to mark for one’s self.”

Paul’s letters to the Thessalonians were written to the whole congregation and not only to the elders. Thus, the marking was not an official action of the congregation, but each member of the congregation could mark the person for himself or herself.

What does the words “stop associating with him” mean? Do they imply shunning? No. He should not be viewed as an enemy, but the members of the congregation should “continue admonishing (*noutheteō*) him.” The word *noutheteō* has the meaning “to put in mind, to admonish, warn” according to Mounce Greek Dictionary. The verb is present active imperative, and this form refers to something that is continuing, as NWT13 shows. Shunning, therefore, is unquestionably ruled out.

The purpose of the treatment of the person is expressed by the verb *entrepō*, whose meaning is “to cause someone to be embarrassed or ashamed” according to Louw and Nida. This verb is aorist passive subjunctive, so the meaning must be “that he might be put to shame.” When we now know the meaning of the principal words, we can understand the meaning of *synanamignymi* (“to mix together”).

Because the letter is written to the whole congregation, none of its members should “associate” with the man,” but all the members of the congregations could “continue admonishing him.” In order to “continue admonishing him” the congregation members had to speak with the man, and while speaking with him, they would treat him as a brother, which would mean greeting him when they met him and treating him in a kind way— and this should continue.

Greek words may have a semantic field including different nuances of meaning, and the context will often indicate the meaning that the author has made visible. The basic meaning of *synanamignymi* is “to mix together.” The extreme way of treating disfellowshipped persons by JW — not greeting a person, not speaking with him, and treating him as if he did not exist — is not included in the semantic field of this word. This is seen in the use of the word in 2 Thessalonians chapter 3. As mentioned, the word is also used in 1 Corinthians chapters 5 and 6, and there is nothing in the context indicating a different meaning from 2 Thessalonians chapter 3.

So, in which sense should Christians not “mix together” (*synanamignymi*) with certain persons? First Corinthians 5:11 shows that not “to mix together” means not to fraternize or associate with persons to the point of not even sharing a meal with them, and 2 Thessalonians chapter 3 shows that the congregation members should continue to speak with and admonish the person they were not to “mix together” (*synanamignymi*) with. And the purpose of this was that the mentioned person “might be ashamed.” So we understand that the relationship between the members of the congregation and the persons they should not “mix together with” had changed.

Sharing a meal would indicate a mutual friendship, where the persons who are eating are on the same level and accept each other’s actions. This we should not do in order to show him that he has to change his course. On the other hand, we should treat the “marked” person as a brother, as Paul directed, admonishing him to change his course. This means that our relationship with him had changed because he had deviated from the Christian way. But to not “mix together” (*synanamignymi*) with him is very far from the concept of shunning him altogether, a concept that has no basis in the Bible.

Admonishing disfellowshipped persons

The apostle Paul told Christians in Thessalonica that they should “continue admonishing” the “marked” person who did not accept the words of Paul, and with whom they were not to fraternize or “associate” (*synanamignymi*). But because this same word is also used in 1 Corinthians chapters 5 and 6, in connection with those who are disfellowshipped, can we conclude that we should also admonish disfellowshipped persons? My answer is clearly Yes because there is nothing in the Christian Greek Scriptures forbidding this.

The Watchtower of August 1, 1974 had articles discussing different sides of disfellowshipping, and these articles had many balanced observations. On page 465 we read:

²⁰Thus, Jesus’ own example protects us against adopting the extreme view of certain rabbinical writers in this matter of dealing with persons as “a man of the nations and as a tax collector.” We see, too, a close similarity between the treatment accorded these and the treatment set forth in the apostle Paul’s instructions regarding those disfellowshipped from the Christian congregation, namely, not “mixing in company” with such ones nor “even eating” with them. (1 Cor. 5:11) Clearly, treating an unrepentant sinner as “a man of the nations and as a tax collector” means there should be no fraternizing with such a one. But, as Jesus’ example shows, this does not require our treating such a one as an enemy or refusing to show common courtesy and consideration. Nor does it rule out the giving of help to those who want to correct a wrong course and gain or regain God’s favor.

Since the members of the current GB reject the conclusions of this 1974 *Watchtower*, and in keeping with the reasoning of that article, this means that the GB has the same extreme view of disfellowshipped persons that certain rabbinical writers had in connection with persons of the nations. The article shows that this view is wrong. To be sure, the exposition of the article expresses a wrong understanding of the scenario presented in Matthew 18:15-17, claiming that the words “let him be to you just as a man of the nations and a tax collector” refer to disfellowshipping.⁴³ However, the article’s conclusion that a Christian should not fraternize with disfellowshipped persons while continuing to show common courtesy and consideration to them are correct and represent good advice.

43. See my article, “A man of the nations, a tax collector” in the category “Shunning not based on the Bible.”

The meaning of “fraternize” is “be on friendly terms with someone; to associate as brothers”⁴⁴ This would also be a fitting descriptions of the situation in Thessalonica. Christians were instructed not to fraternize with the person who did not accept the words of Paul, but they should “continue admonishing him as a brother.” The same must be true in connection with one who has been disfellowshipped.

When the article was published in 1974, I had just started the first of the 30 two-week courses for all elders in Norway where I was the instructor, and I had close contact with the brothers at Bethel. I remember that after we received the article, there was some discussion as to how we should treat disfellowshipped persons in accordance with the viewpoints of the article. For a short time, the view was that we could go as far as studying the Bible with disfellowshipped persons, just as we would study with inactive persons. But this view was soon abandoned. Nevertheless, these sentiments illustrate that it was understood that the Scriptures allowed Christians to not only “show common courtesy and consideration” to disfellowshipped ones, as mentioned in the article, but also to ‘admonish’ them.

However, the view of disfellowshipped persons changed after these Watchtower articles. For many years, the instruction was that once every year, the elders should contact disfellowshipped persons and ask them if they had considered returning to the congregation. This was a good arrangement, but it was discontinued a few years ago.

JEHOVAH’S DISCIPLINE APPLIED TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN DISFELLOWSHIPPED BECAUSE OF ABUSE OF ALCOHOL AND HARD DRUGS

The person in Corinth who had his father’s wife was disfellowshipped because he was “wicked.” However, after a relatively short time, Paul asked the congregation to reinstate the person, and this the congregation did. (2 Corinthians 2:5-8) The reason why he was reinstated is not stated. But we must assume that he had changed his course and no longer was practicing sexual immorality; he had been wicked, but now he was no longer wicked, i.e., he was no longer living in that sinful situation.

44. <http://www.finedictionary.com/fraternise.html>.

Exactly how the man was treated while he was disfellowshipped we do not know. However, Paul speaks about “the rebuke given by the majority.” The word “rebuke” is translated from the Greek word *epitimia*. According to Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich, the corresponding verb *epitimaō* has the meaning, “Rebuke, reprove, censure also speak seriously, warn in order to prevent an action or bring one to an end; punish.” Because *epitimia* is a verbal noun, it expresses the meaning of the verb in a nominal way.

The context does not tell us which part of the verb expressed by the noun that Paul wanted to make visible. But it could be to rebuke the man in order to bring his action to an end. Because this is what really happened — the man ended his sexual immorality — thus, the meaning “to rebuke to bring an action to its end” has good support. The Greek word translated as “the majority” is comparative of the adjective *polys* “much, many.” The parsing is, positive: *many*, comparative: *more*, superlative: *most*. Using the comparative form “more” in verse 6 is not possible in English. The rendering “the majority” would fit the superlative form “most,” but a rendering that would more accurately express “the more” of the congregation would be something between many and most. One possible rendering might be, ‘the rebuke given by the *greater number* is sufficient. . .’ So, while we may keep “the majority” as a possible rendering, we should have in mind that this expression includes more individuals than the Greek text actually says.

That a number of the congregation’s members were behind “the rebuke” shows that this rebuke could not be the disfellowshipping itself, which the whole congregation would stand behind. Therefore, a more logical meaning of the text is that a certain number of the congregation members rebuked, or admonished, the person, probably with the goal of bringing his sexual immorality to an end.

If this is correct, it means that the congregation had not thrown the man into the utter darkness of being shunned. But many members of the congregation spoke with him and had rebuked him. This would mean that the man was treated in about the same way as the man in Thessalonica whom the congregation members continued to admonish.

I will now look at two groups of disfellowshipped persons where shunning clearly is the very opposite of Jehovah’s discipline, namely, persons who are alcoholics or who are abusers of hard drugs. Why can

some persons consume vast amounts of alcohol over a long period of time without becoming alcoholics, while others become dependent on alcohol after only a short time's use? The following quotation may give an answer:

Genetics and Addiction: Is Alcoholism Hereditary or Genetic?

Addiction is a chronic disease of the brain, affecting the reward and motivation centers, and for decades, scientists have argued about the genetic and hereditary components of addiction.

Alcohol use disorder, the medical term for alcoholism and alcohol abuse, has been linked to some specific genes. Having a close relative, such as a parent or sibling, who struggles with alcohol use disorder increases the chances that a person will also struggle with the same addiction.

While genetics and heredity are closely linked – because parents pass their genes down to their children, so children inherit the genes –from a medical perspective, there are some differences when discussing genetic versus hereditary diseases. A person with a genetic disease has an abnormality in their genome; an individual with a hereditary disease has received a genetic mutation from their parents' DNA. When scientists debate whether alcohol use disorder is hereditary or genetic, they debate whether the condition stems from a larger set of genes that are passed down or the disease stems from mutations in some genes...

Genetics are 50 percent of the underlying reason for alcohol use disorder. If a person is predisposed to metabolize alcohol in such a way that the pleasurable effects are more prominent than feeling nauseous, overheating, or experiencing mood swings, the person may be more likely to develop alcohol use disorder.⁴⁵

That some persons are predisposed to alcoholism, is not an excuse for those who no longer have control over their drinking. But the information in the quotation may help Christians better understand Jehovah's discipline in connection with those who have been disfellowshipped for their abuse of alcohol.

In *The Watchtower* of April 15, 2015, page 30, we read:

45. <https://americanaddictioncenters.org/alcoholism-treatment/symptoms-and-signs/hereditary-or-genetic>.

In many cases, disfellowshipping provides the discipline the erring one needs.

The words in the quotation may in some cases be true. But the problem is that shunning a person who has been disfellowshipped for abuse of alcohol will *in most cases* have the opposite effect of what the quotation shows? How so?

Using your imagination, try to empathize with his situation: The alcoholic has tried to quit his bad habit several times but has not succeeded. Now he has been thrown out of the congregation into total darkness. The elders have told him that he has lost Jehovah's approval. He has lost all his friends and family, except those who live in the same household, and he has lost his hope! What does he still have to help him cope? The alcohol.

The wish of the elders, as seen in the quotation above, is that he would repent and return to the congregation. But they have taken away the very things that can help him achieve that goal—he has been cast into total darkness — the ideal environment for alcoholism to thrive. We should not minimize the fact that in addition to inherited sin, this person may be predisposed to the sin that he practices. Alcoholism is a chronic disease of the brain, and to cure a disease, a doctor and medicine are needed. In this case, the “doctor” may be a real doctor or his family and friends, the “medicine” being the support from these. But the elders have taken even that away! They have given up on him and have left him alone without the “doctor and medicine” support system of family and friends.

When we return to Jehovah's discipline, the situation is clear. Family and friends should treat the person who is disfellowshipped for abusing alcohol with love and respect. The elders can only do so much because they have many duties in the congregation. But they can possibly advise the alcohol abuser's family and friends about different kinds of help they can give.

In many situations, professional help can be good. And while the person gets such help, his family and friends can support him and help him to understand that Jehovah has not given up on him. And they must, in turn, help him to understand that he never must give up on himself even when relapses occur. This is not a devaluation of the action of disfellowshipping because they will show him that they cannot socialize with him, and they will let him know that he has to repent to regain his

friendship of Jehovah. But the treatment I have described is practical Christian love in action, in contrast with the cruel and inhuman shunning-treatment of disfellowshipped persons that is currently advocated by the members of the GB.⁴⁶

Contrary to the view of the GB, *addiction* to drugs is not a disfellowshipping offense.⁴⁷ But addiction to hard drugs can lead to intoxication that may be subsumed under the disfellowshipping offense of “being a ‘drunkard’.” The important thing to realize when someone becomes addicted to hard drugs is that this is not planned. In a moment of thoughtlessness, a person may take the drug and then take another drug, and suddenly he or she is hooked. The body of the user of hard drugs develops the addiction to the drug without the consent of the drug user. The addiction to hard drugs is extremely intense and difficult to overcome, as we see in the quotation below.

When people become addicted to heroin, they crave the drug so strongly that, even when they know what consequences they face as a result of their heroin use, they are unable to stay away from the drug. This makes relapse to heroin use incredibly likely after detox. Often, those struggling with heroin addiction experience multiple episodes of relapse on their road to recovery.⁴⁸

The situation with the user of hard drugs is quite similar to that of the abuser of alcohol. It is extremely difficult to quit using hard drugs without help from others. So again, family and friends should be ready to help the drug abuser, and as long as he or she wants to quit the bad habit, they should never give up and family and friends should never give up on them, even if there are relapses.

But the GB has led the organization in the opposite direction of giving help to abusers of hard drugs. As mentioned, the addiction to hard drugs is extremely strong. But when a person wants to quit the bad habit, there is one substance that can be of help, namely, methadone. This chemical is a long-acting opioid that fills the same opioid receptors in the brain that heroin and painkillers do. But persons who use methadone are not

46. See my article “Drunkenness” in the category “The eleven disfellowshipping offenses.”

47. See my article, “Abuse of medical and addictive drugs” in the category, “Gross uncleanness with greediness.”

48. <https://americanaddictioncenters.org/methadone-addiction/pros-cons>.

intoxicated, and in Norway, they are allowed to drive a car while using the drug. In the USA, there are about 100,000 persons who were addicts of hard drugs who today use methadone and are thereby able to live normal lives.

However, an article in *The Watchtower* of June 1, 1973, pages 336, 337, said that the use of methadone was not allowed and was a disfellowshipping offense. This law continued to be valid for 40 years, until 2013, when the GB suddenly decided that methadone could be used if it was prescribed by a doctor. We can just think of all the Witnesses who were disfellowshipped because of the abuse of hard drugs during these 40 years, but who were denied the help to quit the bad habit because of the extreme, ever-shifting views of the GB. If friends and family could have supported these persons when they were trying hard to quit their habit, and if they had been allowed to use methadone, a great number of these addicts could have been helped to live quite normal lives and could have been reinstated in their congregations. This would have been an arrangement that could have been rightly accredited to Jehovah's love and discipline.

Jehovah's discipline applied to all those who have been disfellowshipped

The man in Corinth who was disfellowshipped lived an immoral sexual life, and therefore, the man qualified as being "wicked," as Paul said. But when he repented, he was no longer considered wicked. Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 2:6 may indicate that a number of congregation members strongly admonished the man to change his course, which he did. There is absolutely no biblical reason why family and friends cannot do the same with persons who have been disfellowshipped because of habitual intoxication by alcohol or hard drugs.

As I show in the three articles in the category "Shunning not based on the Bible," the practice of shunning is a human commandment that is not a part of "Jehovah's discipline". Jehovah does not use unnecessary force; he does not scourge sinners when he can help them to repent by gently admonishing them.⁴⁹ Setting the parameters of distance between a

49. Hebrews 12:6 does not contradict this because the verb *mastigoō* (punish severely; whipping) can refer to the disfellowshipping itself, which is a discipline

disfellowshipped person and the members of the congregation as stopping all socializing or fraternizing with him, while allowing the offering of rebuke, admonition, and even help to come back to the congregation, would be a good blend of love and discipline. ***And most important: We must not forget that shunning is a human commandment without any basis in the Bible.***

CONCLUSION

To be sure, this is a radical chapter because it shows that the present regime of disfellowshipping among JW is corrupt, and the procedures that are followed violate a number of Bible principles. Jehovah's Witnesses associate disfellowshipping with Jehovah's discipline and love. However, this article has shown that almost every aspect of the disfellowshipping regime of Jehovah's Witnesses today contradicts expressions and principles in the Bible.

That judicial committees with three elders are formed are not mentioned in the Bible. But the Bible corroborates this procedure as being based on scriptural principles. Apart from that, the reasons given by the GB for disfellowshipping contradict the Bible. For example; the rejection of the view that only persons who "are hardened in wrongdoing" can be disfellowshipped contradict the Bible, disfellowshipping for one or a few serious sins contradict the Bible, the rejection of the requirement of two eyewitnesses to establish guilt contradict the Bible, and that the elders have power over life and death in deciding whether a person has been forgiven or not contradict the Bible.

The true Christian regime of disfellowshipping that is presented in Scripture solves all the basic problems in the present regime. Only persons who are "hardened in wrongdoing" are disfellowshipped, and judging the genuineness of a wrongdoer's repentance is not needed. Persons who have committed a serious sin one or a few times should not be disfellowshipped. But the elders in the congregation should endeavor to help them to understand how they can change their course, and the elders should pray to Jehovah for them.

(*paidenō*, "to instruct, discipline") and not to what happens after the disfellowshipping.

The true disfellowshipping regime is an outstanding example of “Jehovah’s discipline” that embodies both his love and justice.

THE GOVERNING BODY'S NEW VIEW OF THE BIBLE

—REVIEW—

The view held by the Bible Students and JW for 120 years was that every word in the Bible is inspired by God, all the nuances and subtleties are important, and every account is included with a particular purpose. This view has been rejected by the members of the present GB. They do not believe that the nuances and subtleties of the text of the Bible are important—this is seen by the revised *New World Translation* of 2013. Not only do they reject the linguistic nuances as unimportant. But they also believe that the details in many accounts in the Bible are unimportant—only the broad picture is important. And further, they believe that a high number of accounts that in the 20th century were viewed as prophetic are non-prophetic. So, these accounts have no direct meaning for us today.

The consequence of this view is that the texts in a great number of chapters in the Hebrew Scriptures have no independent meaning for us. But they are included to uphold the broad picture, which is the presentation of God's attributes and how we can lead good moral lives. Applying the new view means, for example, that the detailed drama described in Song of Solomon has no particular meaning. What we can learn from this book is that married persons must express affection for one another, and those who are dating must keep their relationship chaste. The new view means that 38 books and hundreds of *Watchtower* articles are just bogus; their prophetic applications are fiction.

More serious is it that the new view undermines the inspiration of the text of the Bible because the GB does not accept that all the details in the accounts of the Bible are included with a particular purpose. This new view of the Bible may contradict the first criterion for being the true religion.

The old and the new views of the Bible have led JW in two different directions. Based on the old view that all the details in the text of the Bible are important, Witnesses were encouraged to do an interactive Bible study. I describe in detail how this was done. The literal translation method of the *New World Translation* (1950-1960) and its footnotes help the Bible student to come close to the original text of the Bible by the use of his or her mother tongue. So this translation was also done with interactive study in view.

There was stress on personal Bible study and accurate knowledge. And the Bible knowledge among the Witnesses was high.

The new view of the Bible was introduced in the 21st century. Examples of this view are given. The consequence of this view is that detailed studies of the text of the Bible only rarely have appeared in the *Watchtower* literature. The stress is now on the faith and morals that can be learned from Bible reading. The personal study of the text of the Bible is no longer stressed. And meditation is encouraged instead of personal study.

Corroborating the new view of the Bible is the revised *New World Translation* (2013). The basic translation principles that made the original NWT such an outstanding scholarly work were rejected by the GB and the translators. An idiomatic and interpretative translation with many weaknesses was the result. Some of these weaknesses are described. The result of the teaching based on this new view is that Bible knowledge among JW, and their ability to use the Bible effectively to defend Christian doctrines, is just a fraction of what it was 60 years ago when I became a Witness.

C. T. Russell and the Bible students in the 19th century believed that the whole Bible was God's inspired Word, that all the nuances and subtleties in the text were important, and that every account is included with a particular purpose. This was also the view of Jehovah's Witnesses throughout the 20th century. And it was beautifully expressed in the *New World Translation* with its accurate renderings of the details and nuances in the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts of the Bible.

However, the present members of the GB have rejected the view of the Bible that was held for more than 120 years and have introduced their own view. This new view is that the text in a great number of chapters in the Hebrew Scriptures has no independent meaning for us today. But the text is included to uphold the broad picture, which is the presentation of God's attributes and how we can worship him in the correct way. The view is also that a great number of texts that in the 20th century were viewed as prophetic now are viewed as non-prophetic. Applying the new view means, for example, that the detailed drama described in Song of Solomon has no particular meaning. What we can learn from this book is that married persons must express affection for one another, and those who are dating must keep their relationship chaste. The new view means that 38 books published by the Watchtower Society and hundreds of *Watchtower* articles are just bogus; their prophetic applications are fiction. More serious is it that the new view undermines the very inspiration of the text of the Bible because it does not accept that all the details in the accounts of the

Bible are included with a particular purpose. This new view may contradict the first criterion for being the true religion (see pages 24-25).

Before I discuss this new view of the Bible, I will discuss the advantages of the old view in connection with the teaching of Bible doctrine.

LEARNING THE TRUTH FROM THEOCRATIC TEACHERS

The fact that the Christian Greek Scriptures does not teach the existence of “the faithful and discreet slave” that gives spiritual food at the proper time and that there should be a governing body for the people of God should not lead to the conclusion that we can stand alone and understand the Bible just by reading its text.

Jesus showed that a part of the sign of his presence was the worldwide preaching of the good news of the Kingdom. (Matthew 24:14) And one important purpose of this preaching was to help sincere persons to become reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:20) It is not likely that I had started to study the Bible if representatives of JW had not approached me and told me about the message of the Bible. And if these Witnesses had not helped me in my study, I would not have been able to discern the fundamental doctrines of the Bible. Millions of other Witnesses have experienced exactly the same, as Paul shows in Romans 10:13–17 (NWT13):

¹³ For “everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved.” ¹⁴ However, how will they call on him if they have not put faith in him? How, in turn, will they put faith in him about whom they have not heard? How, in turn, will they hear without someone to preach? ¹⁵ How, in turn, will they preach unless they have been sent out? Just as it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who declare good news of good things!” ¹⁶ Nevertheless, they did not all obey the good news. For Isaiah says: “Jehovah, who has put faith in the thing heard from us? ¹⁷ So faith follows the thing heard. In turn, what is heard is through the word about Christ.

These words corroborate the work of Jehovah’s Witnesses and their worldwide preaching campaign. In all the countries of the world are there preachers of the good news of the Kingdom. But if there is no “faithful and discreet slave” who gives spiritual food at the proper time, what should the relationship be between the organization of preachers and those who hear the preaching of the Kingdom?

To answer that, we need to consider how it is possible to understand the Bible. What are the keys?

First, it is obvious that a detailed understanding of the Bible languages, Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek, is necessary to understand the text of the Bible, as well as a knowledge of linguistics. All the subtleties and nuances of the original text cannot be ascertained without such knowledge. This fact alone shows that we cannot stand alone. But those who hear the preaching are dependent on those who preach, and those who preach are dependent on other Christians who have the mentioned linguistic knowledge.

Second, a great number of Bible prophecies should be fulfilled on the “holy people,” the true Christian people. In chapter 1, I referred to several time prophecies: 1,260, 1,290, 1,135, and 2,300 days. To understand these prophecies, a detailed understanding of the history of the people of God is necessary. And those who hear the preaching of the Kingdom do not have such knowledge.

Third, a detailed knowledge of the entire Bible is necessary. Different details of Bible doctrines are spread throughout the whole book. A synthesis of these details must be made, and that requires detailed knowledge of the entire Bible. Those who hear the preaching do not have this knowledge.

Fourth, it is necessary to have a detailed knowledge of world history. This is so because prophecies in the books of Daniel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and other books have been fulfilled on different nations that have existed in the past, and on some nations that still are existing. And again, those who hear the preaching do not have such knowledge.

The four points mentioned above show that those who hear the good news of the Kingdom are at the outset dependent upon the organization of Jehovah’s Witnesses for their understanding of the Bible. But this dependence is not absolute but relative, as I will show below.

THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERACTIVE LEARNING

When there is no “faithful and discreet slave,” giving spiritual food at the proper time, in which way are sincere persons dependent on the organization of Jehovah’s Witnesses? The words of Acts 17:11 (NWT13) give the answer:

Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica for they accepted the word with the greatest eagerness of mind, carefully examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

The quoted words represent “interactive learning,” which means that the students are not passive listeners, but they take part in the very learning process. Paul and Silas, who were knowledgeable Christians, taught those who attended the synagogue services in Beroea. These people worked with what they were taught and checked it with the Scriptures. This kind of interactive preaching and learning was practiced by Jehovah’s Witnesses for several decades from the 1940s. But it has not been practiced in the 21st century. Meditation has, to a great extent, taken the place of personal study. And the previous *relative* dependence on the organization the GB has transformed into an *absolute* dependence!

THE STRESS ON ACCURATE KNOWLEDGE IN THE 20TH CENTURY

One scripture that was often quoted in 1961, when I began to study the Bible, was Hosea 4:6 (NWT84):

My people will certainly be silenced, because there is no knowledge. Because the knowledge is what you yourself have rejected, I shall also reject you from serving as a priest to me.

To memorize scriptures, and to be able to defend the faith only by using the Bible was stressed. And the words of Colossians 1:10 (NWT84) were often quoted: “and increasing in the accurate knowledge (*epignōsis*) of God” But what support did those who eagerly wanted to grow in the accurate knowledge of God have?

A.H. Macmillan had been a part of the organization since 1899, and in 1958 he presented his memoirs in the book *Faith on the March*. On page 193 of this book, he describes a campaign of interactive teaching and learning that started after World War II.

Organizationally we were now on solid footing, and the maturity of the Society as a whole was quite evident. But Knorr realized that every minister must be personally equipped to preach...Now Knorr embarked on a campaign to bring maturity to every one of Jehovah’s witnesses and especially prepare them to preach individually yet without contradicting one another.

It was the spiritual leadership of Knorr that laid the groundwork for interactive Bible study.

THE METHOD OF INTERACTIVE BIBLE STUDY

When I had learned the elementary teachings about Christ, I wanted to progress toward maturity. (Hebrews 6:1) And it did not take a long time before I realized that there existed a treasure-chest that would support my efforts to grow in accurate knowledge. This was all *The Watchtower* magazines from 1940 and down to 1960, and all the *Awake!* magazines from 1946. One of these, *The Watchtower* of March 1, 1956, pages 144–151, made an enormous impression on me because it helped me to see the importance of the nuances and subtleties in the original text of the Bible. The article was entitled, “Keeping Up with the Truth,” and it had four different suggestions for interactive Bible study.

The fourth suggestion would help the student to get a good understanding of one whole book in the Bible, such as Philippians, which was used as an example. First, the student carefully reads a group of verses that constitute a paragraph. Second, he or she wrestles with the details of the verses, finding their leading thought, and expresses this thought with as few words as possible. This is the theme of the verses. Third, the student finds one verse, which is the principal expression of the theme. Fourth, the student reads a sequence of the following verses and treat them in the same way. Fifth, the student studies all the themes he or she has found and makes a theme for the whole book.

The theme given for Philippians in the article is: “Loving encouragement for faith.” And the themes of the different parts are as follows:

Table 6.1 The leading thoughts of Philippians

Chapter	Theme verse	Leading thought
1	7	Defending the good news
2	5	Keep the right mental attitude.
3	14	Pursuing for the prize.
4	7	Guard heart and mental powers.

I used this method for the letters and epistles of the Christian Greek Scriptures and some books in the Hebrew Scriptures. And I added one extra element, namely an in-depth study of particular important verses inside each leading thought. In order to get the right understanding of the verses, I used the Index of the Watchtower literature from 1930-1960 and looked up different comments. And here is the interactive nature of this form of study clearly seen. Experienced Christians connected with the Watchtower Society had written comments on different verses in the Bible. When reading these comments, I considered them “with the greatest eagerness of mind,” as did the people of Beroea. And then, I worked hard with the text of the particular Bible book to find its leading thoughts and the meaning of the more difficult verses. While I studied, I took notes. And after several years, I had around 5,000 pages of notes. Now I felt I was a real *Bible* student.

From a pedagogical point of view, the poorest form of teaching is the lecture, where the speaker gives a lot of ideas and information to a passive audience. In the same class of poor teaching are articles that contain a lot of claims but not reasonings and arguments that can be tested by the readers. How can we classify the articles in *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* between 1940 and 1960? My judgment is that a significant number of articles had scholarly characteristics because they contained logical arguments that could be tested. Therefore, they were excellent tools for interactive learning. These articles and the way my theocratic teachers taught me to study were what triggered my interest in the original languages of the Bible and related languages that I later have studied.

THE WATCHTOWER PUBLICATIONS USED FOR INTERACTIVE LEARNING

When I realized that the Watchtower publications from 1940 contained studies of the text of the Bible of high quality, I started a systematic study of these publications.

I would like to give a few examples, and I start with the studies of important words. The translation of the Greek word *aiōn* in NWT84 and NWT13 is “system of things.” This is an un-idiomatic rendering that is rarely found in English literature. Some translations use “world” for *aiōn*. But this is a bad rendering because this is the word that should be used for *kosmos*. Other translations use the word “age,” which is an idiomatic

rendering. However, the problem with “age” is that it basically stresses the time element. But *aiōn* is a time period where the stress is on the characteristics and things of the time period. *The Watchtower* of November 1, 1949, page 325, shows that the rendering “age” is a bad choice and “system of things” is a good choice:

Paul again used *aiōn*, at Galatians 1:3, 4, to say: “Our Lord, Jesus Christ . . . gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world [*aiōn*]. Since Christians from Paul’s day till now have continued to live in the same general period of time in which evil or wickedness controls mankind, *aiōn* here cannot mean a *time* period. It must be the system of things which is evil and from which Jesus Christ has delivered and consecrated followers.

The argument is clear, and to do an accurate literal translation, the rendering “system of things” is excellent. The article, “Why God’s Field Will Be Productive” in *The Watchtower* of January 15, 1964 discusses the references of the Greek word *kosmos* (“world”). Contrary to the use in Classical Greek, the word refers to different sides of the human family. It refers to 1) the whole human family (John 3:16), 2) the human family outside the Christian congregation (John 17:14), and 3) the framework of human conditions into which a child is born. (John 16:21) The article also shows that the expression “the foundation/founding of the world” does not refer to the creation of the universe but to the birth of Abel, when the foundation of the human family was laid. (Luke 11:50, 51) This means that when Ephesians 1:4 says that the Christians were chosen before “the founding of the world,” this does not indicate predestination. These Christians were not chosen before the earth was created, but they were chosen after the first humans sinned and before Abel was born.

I would not have been able to find all the interesting information in the two mentioned articles on my own. But experienced Christians presented this information in two articles in *The Watchtower*, thus being my teachers. And the information was presented in a form so I could examine the Scriptures to see whether these things were so, just like the noble-minded people in Beroea.

When I searched *The Watchtower* magazines from 1940 onward, I found a high number of articles that taught me interesting sides of the basic truths of the Bible. Also, there were a high number of articles that dealt with the other kind of material in the Bible, that is, material where only half is found in the Bible and the other half must be found by Bible readers. One such

prophetic article that greatly impressed me was the one dealing with the Song of Solomon. The article is entitled “The Loved Woman of the Superlative Song” in *The Watchtower* of December 1, 1957, pages 720–734. In the Song of Solomon, it is not always easy to know who is speaking. I did not know Hebrew when I studied the article, and therefore I appreciated that the author helped me understand who was speaking based on grammatical gender. The interpretation of the drama about the Shulammitte was based on the principles of types and antitypes that already were used by C. T. Russell in his book *Tabernacle Shadows* (1899). In my view, this interpretation is balanced and logical. But of course, viewpoints of the meaning of prophetic texts may change.

The *Awake!* magazine also had many interesting articles from 1946 onward. I particularly appreciated the two-page articles of deep Biblical subjects under the headings, “Your Word is Truth” and “What Is the Bible’s View?”

While I studied the articles in *The Watchtower*, I did not only learn much from the arguments and the conclusions but also from the methodology of the studies. I noted especially the importance of small words for an accurate understanding—words such as articles, prepositions, demonstratives, and conjunctions. In 1963, there was an eight-day international assembly in Stockholm, Sweden, where the book “*Babylon the Great Has Fallen*” *God’s Kingdom Rules!* was published. I still remember a thought-provoking talk given by F. W. Franz, where he shouted with his strong voice: “Get out of her, my people!” The next years, a series of very interesting articles that were partially based on the *Babylon* book was published. The article in *The Watchtower* of April 1, 1966, pages 215–216 discussed Matthew 24:14 and reading it gave me a real Aha! moment:

In answer Jesus described a long list of events that would take place to mark this time of his second presence and, among other things, he said: “This good news of the kingdom will be preached in all the inhabited earth for a witness to all the nations; and then the end will come.”—Matt. 24:14.

After Jesus’ death his disciples no longer proclaimed ‘the kingdom is at hand,’ for the King was not at hand among them. They preached the Kingdom to come. The preachers of Christendom have been preaching a kingdom to come through the past centuries. But notice that Jesus was talking about the *time of the end*, when he said: “THIS good news of the kingdom will be preached.” Yes, the good news of the King *at hand* would again be preached, meaning that the Kingdom had been obtained by the King and that he had

returned to exercise Kingdom power. In other words, *this* good news of the kingdom would be the good news that at last the Kingdom had been established in power. The purpose of the preaching of it would be for a witness. It would therefore be done by Kingdom witnesses who would be Christians.

A demonstrative pronoun must have an antecedent. If we believe that the Bible is inspired by God and that all its nuances are important, it is not possible to dispute the conclusion of the article. An important truth is expressed in a simple way!

Another Aha! moment for me was reading the comments in “Questions From Readers” in *The Watchtower* of May 1, 1974. The heavenly and earthly hopes were discussed, and the article said in part:

What the King Jesus Christ said to them helps us to understand that two distinct classes are involved. His words to the “sheep” were: “Inherit the kingdom prepared for you *from* the founding of the world.” (Matt. 25:34) That is different from what is said of Christ’s “brothers.” The membership for the heavenly kingdom that these “brothers” were to inherit was foreknown *before* the “founding of the world,” that is, before the world of mankind came into being through the birth of children to the first human pair, Adam and Eve. The apostle Paul, writing to fellow Christians, states: “[God] chose us in union with [Christ] *before* the founding of the world.”—Eph. 1:4, 5.

The arguments are very clear, and they cannot be disputed. The last two examples show how important it is to carefully study all the words in a verse in the Bible, also the words that seem to be insignificant. I will discuss two more examples along the same lines. The first shows the importance of comparing “catchwords” to understand the setting of a chapter or a book. The chapter “Awaiting the ‘New Heavens and a New Earth’” in the book, *Man’s Salvation Out of World Distress at Hand!* (1975) gave me real food for thought. Second Peter speaks about new heavens and a new earth. (2 Peter 3:13) But the setting of the book is “God’s word” (*logos*). Chapter 1, verses 16 and 17, speaks about “a voice” (*fonē* can also mean “spoken words”), and verse 19 speaks about “the prophetic word” (*profētikos logos*). Verses 20 and 21 use the synonym “prophetic word” (*profeteia*). In 2:3, the contrast of God’s word is mentioned, namely, “counterfeit words” (*plastois logois* “fabricated words”), which originates with humans. Then 3:5 shows that the heavens and the earth were formed by “God’s word,” and 3:7 shows that by “the same word” from God the heavens and the earth “are

stored up for fire.” Based on this setting, a detailed study of the different themes of the book and its Greek text was and will be profitable.

The best article I ever read about the Memorial I found in *The Watchtower* of January 1, 1956, pages 44–55.⁵⁰ The article was entitled, “‘The Table of Demons’ Versus ‘The Table of Jehovah.’” The catchword is “table,” and it is found in 1 Corinthians 10:21 (NWT13):

You cannot be drinking the cup of Jehovah and the cup of demons; you cannot be partaking of “the *table* of Jehovah” and the *table* of demons.

What was Jehovah’s *table*? It was his altar. (Malachi 1:7, 12; Ezekiel 41:22) The article shows that when an Israelite brought a communion sacrifice, parts of the animal was burned on the altar for Jehovah. The officiating priest and Aaron’s priestly sons got their parts, and the offerer and his family got their parts. Because the altar was Jehovah’s table, in a way, the offerer and his family sat on one side of the table, and they were eating together with Jehovah, who was on the other side of the table. It was a communion meal between Jehovah and the offerer and his family.

Paul shows that the communion meals in Israel represented prophetic types that he applied to the memorial, and the catchwords and the setting are “Jehovah’s table.” (1 Corinthians 10:16–21; 11:23–29) For those who eat the bread and drink the wine, the memorial is a communion meal. Jehovah is the author of the arrangement, and the communion sacrifice is the body and blood of Jesus. The partakers are sitting at Jehovah’s table, and their eating with Jehovah indicates that they are at peace with him.

I conclude this section with reference to five articles dealing with the resurrection in *The Watchtower* of 1965. The first article was so exciting that I could hardly wait for the next issue of the magazine. These articles are masterpieces of scholarly expositions of the original text of the Bible.⁵¹

What I have described in this section is how theocratic teachers have taught me Bible truths. It would have been impossible for me to find these truths on my own. So, I am grateful to my teachers who did the work for

50. See also *The Watchtower* of January 15, 1951, pages 50–52, and February 15, 2003, page 31.

51. “Death and Hades to Give Up the Dead”; “The Dead Who Are in Line for Resurrection”; “For Whom There Are Resurrection Hopes”; “Who Will be Resurrected from the Dead?”; “Who Will be Resurrected—Why?” in *The Watchtower* of January 15, February 1, February 15, March 1, and March 15, 1965.

me. In addition to providing the study material, they have also helped me in two important areas. First, they helped me to come as close as possible to the original text of the Bible with the help of my mother tongue and English. This was done with the help of the original *New World Translation* and the *Kingdom Interlinear Translation* (KI). Also, the scholarly way many articles were written helped me to focus on the original text of the Bible.

Second, the teaching method was not the one of dogmatic dictation. But the articles and the study material were made in a way as to stimulate my curiosity, and to help me to work with the material on my own. It was obvious that my teachers wanted me to be a part of the teaching process. Because of this, I built a strong faith in the Bible and its author, Jehovah God. So, what I have described is interactive teaching and interactive learning at its very best.

The strong weight on interactive learning continued for a long time after the elder arrangement was instituted in 1972. The book, *United in Worship of the Only True God*, was published in 1983. When an interested person had studied the basic Bible study book, *The Truth that Leads to Eternal Life* (1968), the recommendation was that the interested person should study the *United Worship* book. The book invites the reader to do an interactive Bible study, and on page 27, we read:

When you read the Bible consider—

- What each portion tells you about Jehovah as a person
- How it relates to the overall theme of the Bible
- How context affects the meaning
- How it should affect your own life
- How you can use it to help others

In addition to the questions to the paragraphs, the book has several other questions for the readers. By working with these questions and the scriptures they refer to, the readers would learn how to perform an effective personal study. This is the best book for interactive learning that the Watchtower Society has published. Unfortunately, no later publication has included the excellent teaching principles of this book.

BIBLE TRANSLATIONS AND INTERACTIVE LEARNING

From the days of C. T. Russell, the Bible Students and Jehovah's Witnesses have used all existing Bible translations. But in 1950, the *New World*

Translation of the Christian Greek Scriptures was released. This translation was made by scholars who were Witnesses. But their identities were not revealed.

The reason for this new translation was twofold. First, religious traditions “have been interwoven into the translations [the existing translations] to color the thought.”⁵² This was avoided in this new translation. Second, the translation was made for interactive learning.

We offer no paraphrase of the Scriptures. Our endeavor all through has been to give as literal a translation as possible, where the modern English idiom allows and where a literal rendition does not for any clumsiness hide the thought. That way we can best meet the desire of those who are scrupulous for getting, as nearly as possible, word for word, the exact statement of the original.⁵³

The quoted words show that the text was arranged in a way so the reader could work with it, and by this, have a part in the understanding of the text. This is a typical example of interactive learning.

I will elucidate this point by showing the difference between different kinds of Bible translations. As I show in my discussion of “The application of Lexical Semantics” on pages 218–220, a word has a core meaning and a semantic field with different shades of meaning. Also, a word has one or more references, which are the things in the world denoted by the word. One basic difference between strictly literal translations, such as NWT50, and idiomatic and interpretive translations, such as NWT13, is that the former basically uses the core meanings as its renderings, but the latter basically uses the references as its renderings.⁵⁴

I use the Hebrew word *nəp̄ǣs̄* and the corresponding Greek word *psychē* as examples. The core meaning of both words is “soul.” But the word can have thirty or more different references, such as the literal ones, “human being; animal; dead body,” and the abstract reference, “right to live.” NWT50 and the later NWT translation of the Hebrew/Aramaic text consistently render *nəp̄ǣs̄* and *psyche* by “soul.” In this way, the reader

52. Foreword, page 6.

53. Ibid., page 9.

54. For a detailed discussion of this issue as well as other issues of Bible translation, see my book *The Role of Theology and Bias in Bible Translation With a Special Look at the New World Translation of Jehovah’s Witnesses*, second edition 2011, 475 pages.

who does not know the original languages can find the meaning of these words by studying the contexts. Idiomatic translations use the references as renderings, and by this interpret the text for the reader, who will not know that the same original word is behind all these renditions. Moreover, in many instances, the reference of a word is not apparent, or there are two different possibilities. The translators then choose one and leave out the other. In this way, nuances from the original text may be lost. Some translators argue that “soul” is an old-fashioned word that may give wrong connotations, so it should not be used. However, all translations of which I am aware use the word “soul” for *psychē* in Matthew 10:28. And this shows that the argument is not valid.

The Greek word *kosmos* (“world”) may illustrate the advantage of using one English word for one Greek word. Both literal and idiomatic translations, in most instances, use “world” to translate *kosmos*. One reason for this consistency, evidently, is that most of the references of *kosmos* must be expressed with several words, which is problematic in a Bible translation. We see this in table 6.2.

Table 6.2 References of kosmos

John 3:16	The human family.
John 17:14	The human family outside the Christian congregation.
John 16:21	The framework of human conditions into which a child is born.
Acts 17:24	The universe. ⁵⁵
1 Peter 3:3	Adornment. ⁵⁶

The principle of using the core meaning “world” as a translation of *kosmos* and letting the readers find the reference in each case works very well in most Bible translations and for most readers. Therefore, the same principle could also have been used in connection with *naēpæsΣ* / *psychē* and

55. Because Paul spoke with Greek philosophers, he likely used *kosmos* with a reference that they would understand.

56. Basic notions that are connected with *kosmos* are “arrangement” and “order.” These notions are close to “adornment.”

several other words as well. This is what the NWT50 and NWT84⁵⁷ have done.

In addition to the literal text of the translation, the footnotes and cross-references in NWT50 and NWT84 are also arranged for interactive learning. They give alternative translations of the same word, and they refer to the readings of different Greek, Latin, and Syriac manuscripts. Both by studying the literal renderings, as well as the footnotes and cross-references, the reader can come close to the original text by using his or her mother tongue.

The NWT50 is an excellent scholarly translation. Both its literal text, its footnotes, and cross-references surpass any other existing translation at that time. And best of all, from my point of view, is its appeal to the reader to work with the text of the Bible to find its subtleties and nuances.

The stress on accurate knowledge, and the appeal to be acquainted with the original text of the Bible, or at least its nuances and subtleties, continued through the 1950s and 1960s; and in 1969, *The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures* was published. It contains the text of NWT50 on one side and the Greek text with a word-for-word rendering of this text on the other. Now the readers got the opportunity to work with the Greek text of the Bible and better understand the translation of this text.

In addition to the NWT50, five different parts with translations of the Hebrew and Aramaic texts were published between 1953 and 1960. These were slightly revised and collected into one volume with references in 1984. Its Appendix, footnotes, and cross-references again invite the readers to interactive learning by working with the text of the Bible.

We should note that while these different versions were made, the expressions “the faithful and discreet slave” and “the Governing Body” occasionally were used in the Watchtower literature. But these expressions were loosely connected with the Watchtower Society and with the teachers who wrote the articles and books. And there was no autocratic organization where a few persons had all the power.

57. NWT84 includes both the Greek and the Hebrew and Aramaic parts of the Bible.

THE STRESS ON MEDITATION IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In the 20th century, the focus was on accurate knowledge because of the campaign of interactive teaching and learning that Knorr started after World War II (see pages 210-211). In the 21st century, the focus has been on meditation. The word “meditation” has been repeated so often that it has become a mantra. And meditation has, to a great extent, taken the place of personal study and accurate Bible knowledge. Meditation is, of course, important for Christians. When we meditate on all the things Jehovah has created, and all his supreme attributes, our appreciation for our heavenly Father will increase. When we look intently at a scripture in the Bible for some time (meditating on it), occasionally, we can discover a side of the text that we have not seen before. But apart from this, we do not learn new things through meditation. The only way to learn new things is by a personal study of the text of the Bible. Meditation does not lead us to become teachers, but personal study will bolster our faith and make us qualified to teach others. (Hebrews 5:12–6:2)

Meditation has today become a mantra and has, to a great extent, taken the place of personal study.

In the Watchtower ONLINE LIBRARY (1986–2021), there are few references on personal study. *The Watchtower* of December 1, 2002, pages 13–23, has the article, “Enjoy Personal Study of God’s Word.” But the first four paragraphs deal exclusively with meditation and not with Bible study. However, paragraphs 18–20 discuss how we can study with the help of the *New World Translation*, and this is good advice. The first reference to personal study after the publication of NWT13 is *The Watchtower* of September 15, 2015, pages 4–6, but it contains no advice as to the method of study. However, paragraphs 16–18 in the article, “Improve Your Study Habits!” in *The Watchtower* of May 2019 has some good suggestions, even a point that can be classified as interactive learning. But in the 21st century, interactive study of the text of the Bible is no longer encouraged—the focus is on meditation.

As shown in the paragraph above, a personal study of the text of the Bible has occasionally been mentioned in the Watchtower literature in the 21st century. But personal interactive study is no longer encouraged, and how to do such a study is almost never mentioned. In the 20th century,

the focus was on personal study of the text of the Bible and on daily Bible reading. In the 21st century, the focus is on daily Bible reading and on meditation.

An Italian brother with a great knowledge of the Bible and related subjects told me that he gave a public lecture in his congregation. After the talk, two elders approached him and gave him credit for some details he had discussed that were new to them. But they also reprimanded him because he had quoted two scriptures that were not found in the printed outline of the talk. “We must not add anything to the material that comes from *the slave*,” were their words. This situation shows that many Witnesses today view the eight men in the GB *almost* as prophets and oracles. They are the only ones that can teach others the Bible, and we must follow them closely. It also shows the total lack of interactive learning in the organization today.

Before the elder arrangement, the public lectures lasted 55 or 60 minutes, and their outlines contained about half as many points as the outlines of the present public lectures of 30 minutes. The brothers giving the 55/60-minute lectures were encouraged to carefully research all sides of the subjects of the outline, which meant interactive learning. And while they should present the main points of the outline, they had great freedom to use interesting points that they had found by their own research. Unity in Christian beliefs was also stressed in the time before the elder arrangement. Because the members of the congregations had learned Bible truths from the Watchtower literature, they were encouraged to look in a positive way at the new literature that they would receive. But at the same time, Bible study and interactive learning were encouraged.

As mentioned in the introduction, the present GB has introduced a new view of the Bible that prevents interactive learning. This is a view that is different from the view of the members of the New World Bible Translation Committee in 1950 and from the view of the members of the Governing Body that was instituted in 1971. This new view is the reason why there is so much stress on meditation at the expense of personal study. I will discuss this in detail below.

THE NEW VIEW OF THE MEANING OF BIBLE TEXTS

The present GB has presented a new view of the Bible that is very different from the view of Bible Students in the 19th century and JW in the 20th

century. This view has been presented overtly and covertly in publications in the 21st century. This view undermines the view of the *inspiration* of the Bible that was held in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Excursus on the GB's new view of the Bible

The new view of the Bible is applied in three different areas.

The small nuances of the original text

The members of the original New World Bible Translation Committee believed that every word in the Bible is inspired by God and that every account is included with a particular purpose.⁵⁸ Therefore, they made a translation where the subtleties and nuances of the original text are found.

Under the direction of the GB, a revision of NWT was made. The GB and the translators rejected the two basic principles of the original NWT 1) to convey all the nuances of the verbs, and 2) to use one English word for each original word whenever possible. The NWT13 has many weaknesses, and it shows that the GB no longer views the nuances and the subtleties of the original text as important.

The new view of types and antitypes

Most of the accounts in the Hebrew Scriptures that the Bible Students and JW for 120 years viewed as prophecies or prophetic types are rejected as such. The consequence of the view of the present GB is that 38 books and hundreds of *Watchtower* articles that previously were written are just bogus—their prophetic explanations are fiction.

The criterion for taking an account as a prophetic type, according to the GB, is that there “***is a clear Scriptural basis for doing so.***”⁵⁹ This is a good criterion. But recent books and articles in *The Watchtower* show that this criterion is interpreted far too strict, to the point where most accounts that in the 20th century were taken as prophetic types are rejected as such.

58. The view is not that God dictated every word. The writers chose the words while they were borne along by holy spirit. (2 Peter 1:21, NWT84)

59. *The Watchtower* of June 15, 2015, page 8.

The consequence of this view is that a great number of verses and chapters in the Hebrew Scriptures have no independent meaning for us; they are just “filling material.” This undermines the view that every word in the Bible is inspired by God and that every account is included with a particular purpose and has an independent meaning.

The new subjective and allegorical method of interpretation

The new way of Bible exposition used by the present GB is subjective and allegorical.⁶⁰ The basis of the method is the belief that great parts of the books of the Hebrew Scriptures have no meaning for us today—they are not prophetic. But these texts *can remind us* of moral values.

I will illustrate the situation with my grandmother’s “Manna”-box with small paper bits with scriptures. Every day she took one scripture, and she meditated on what the scripture meant for her. The scripture was the “concrete idea,” and her subjective application on herself was “the allegory.”

Naboth was killed by Ahab and Jezebel, and regarding this account, we read:

For example, we can rightly say that Naboth’s integrity in the face of persecution and death *reminds us* of the integrity of Christ and his anointed. However, we can also *be reminded* of the faithful stand of many of the Lord’s “other sheep.” Such a clear and simple comparison has the hallmark of divine teaching. (My italics.)

The keywords in the quotation are “*reminds us*,” and “*we can also be reminded*.” This is exactly the same approach as the one of my grandmother. The particular account is the “concrete idea,” and the subjective application, that is, what the account reminds the GB of, is “the allegory.” And there are no constraints, so the GB can apply the account in the way they want.

60. The words “allegory” and “allegorical” are defined in the following ways: *Allegory*: “a story, play, poem, picture, or other work in which the characters and events represent particular qualities or ideas that relate to morals, religion, or politics.” (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/allegory>) *Allegorical*: Allegorical stories and plays use concrete ideas as symbols for deeper or layered meanings. Folk tales and fables are often allegorical. (<https://www.vocabulary.com/dictionary/allegorical>)

An excellent example of this allegorical method of exposition is the book, *Pure Worship of Jehovah—Restored At Last* (2019). But most readers will not discover this method because it is disguised in the text. Below I give several examples of the allegorical method used in this book. For instance, Ezekiel, as watchman (Ezekiel chapter 33), is not a prophetic type of anyone or anything. But because modern watchmen are mentioned in the *Pure Worship* book, it will appear to the reader that Ezekiel foreshadowed these watchmen. But that is not the case.

This new method of exposition is the diametrical opposite of the old method. In articles in *The Watchtower* that helped me to understand the Bible, the original text was analyzed, and its meaning was explained. This method invited me to interactive learning because I could check the conclusions of the articles. This means that I was dependent on those who wrote the articles for gathering the data for me. But I was not dependent on their interpretations.

The members of the GB today rarely analyze the text of the Bible, showing the meaning of this text. But to a great extent, they write what the text of the Bible *reminds them of* and about *the lessons* we can learn from these texts. Both are subjective endeavors that are difficult to check. So, the readers are, to a great extent, dependent on *the opinions* of the members of the GB and not on the text of the Bible. Two of the clearest examples of this allegorical method that I am aware of are the following: The perimeter wall of the temple (Ezekiel 42:20) “*reminds us* that we must never let anything corrupt our worship of Jehovah.” And the lofty outer gates and the inner gates “*remind us* that Jehovah has high standards of conduct for all who would engage in pure worship.” (*Pure Worship* book, page 152) There is, of course, no relationship between walls and gates and high standards of conduct and not to bring anything corrupt before Jehovah. These are typical allegorical explanations.

Conclusion

The rejection of the importance of the nuances of the text of the Bible, the rejection of a great number of prophetic types with the consequence that many accounts in the Hebrew Scriptures have no independent meaning for us, and the allegorical method of Bible interpretation *undermines the very inspiration* of the Bible.

THE NEW VIEW OF TYPES AND ANTITYPES PRESENTED

The new view of the Bible dealing with types and antitypes was presented in *The Watchtower* of March 15, 2015, pages 7–11. This view has dramatic consequences, and I bring a long quotation:

A SIMPLER, CLEARER APPROACH TO BIBLE NARRATIVES

⁷ If you have been serving Jehovah for decades, you may have noticed a gradual shift in the way our literature explains many of the narratives recorded in the Bible. How so? In times past, it was more common for our literature to take what might be called a type-antitype approach to Scriptural accounts. The Bible narrative was considered the type, and any prophetic fulfillment of the story was the antitype. Is there a Scriptural basis for prophetic pictures? Yes. For instance, Jesus spoke of “the sign of Jonah the prophet.” (Read Matthew 12:39, 40) Jesus explained that Jonah’s sojourn in the belly of the fish—which would have been Jonah’s grave had Jehovah not preserved him alive—was prophetic of Jesus’ own time in the grave.

⁸ The Bible contains other inspired prophetic pictures. The apostle Paul discussed a number of them. For example, Abraham’s relationship with Hagar and Sarah provided a prophetic picture of Jehovah’s relationship with the nation of Israel and the heavenly part of God’s organization. (Gal. 4:22–26) Similarly, the tabernacle and the temple, Atonement Day, the high priest, and other facets of the Mosaic Law contained “a shadow of the good things to come.” (Heb. 9:23–25; 10:1) It is fascinating and faith-strengthening to study such prophetic pictures. Can we conclude, though, that *every* character, event, and object described in the Bible foreshadows someone or something?

⁹ In the past, such an approach was often taken. Consider, for example, the account about Naboth, whose unjust trial and execution were arranged by wicked Queen Jezebel so that her husband, Ahab, could seize Naboth’s vineyard. (1 Ki. 21:1–16) Back in 1932, that account was explained as a prophetic drama. Ahab and Jezebel were said to picture Satan and his organization; Naboth pictured Jesus; Naboth’s death, then, was prophetic of Jesus’ execution. Decades later, though, in the book “*Let Your Name Be Sanctified*,” published in 1961, Naboth was said to picture the anointed, and Jezebel was Christendom. Hence, Naboth’s persecution at Jezebel’s hands pictured the persecution of the anointed during the last days. *For many years, God’s people found this approach to Bible accounts faith strengthening. Why, then, have things changed?*

¹⁰ . . . Jehovah has helped “the faithful and discreet slave” to become steadily more discreet. Discretion has led to greater caution when it comes to calling a Bible account a prophetic drama unless there is **a clear Scriptural basis** for doing so. Additionally, it has been found that some of the older explanations about types and antitypes are

unduly difficult for many to grasp. The details of such teachings—who pictures whom and why—can be hard to keep straight, to remember, and to apply. *Of even greater concern, though, is that the moral and practical lessons of the Bible accounts under examination may be obscured or lost in all the scrutiny of possible antitypical fulfillments.*⁶¹ Thus, we find that our literature today focuses more on the simple, practical lessons about faith, endurance, godly devotion, and other vital qualities that we learn about from Bible accounts.

¹¹ *How, then, do we now understand the account about Naboth? In much clearer, simpler terms.* That righteous man died, not because he was a prophetic type of Jesus or of the anointed, but because he was an integrity keeper. He held to Jehovah’s Law in the face of horrific abuse of power. (Num. 36:7; 1 Ki. 21:3) His example thus speaks to us because any one of us may face persecution for similar reasons. (Read 2 Timothy 3:12.) People of all backgrounds can readily understand, remember, and apply such a faith-strengthening lesson.

¹² Should we conclude that Bible narratives have only a practical application and no other meaning? No. *Today our publications are more likely to teach that one thing reminds us of or serves to illustrate another. They are less likely to present many Bible accounts in a rigid framework of prophetic types and antitypes. For example, we can rightly say that Naboth’s integrity in the face of persecution and death reminds us of the integrity of Christ and his anointed. However, we can also be reminded of the faithful stand*

61. This is one of the direct or indirect accusations against the leading brothers in the 20th century who wrote articles dealing with deep truths. I will counter this accusation. I have never seen that moral and practical lessons have been obscured or lost in our literature or at our assemblies. It was the very blend of solid truths, types and antitypes, and moral and spiritual advice that really stimulated my faith. At my first district assembly in 1962 in Bergen, three talks discussed the Word (*logos*) according to John. We got a new understanding of the superior authorities in Romans, chapter 13, as well as much advice regarding Christian living. At the eight-day international assembly in Stockholm in 1963, there were several talks on the book of Revelation, but also much good advice in connection with our preaching, families, and Christian life. The theme of the district assembly in Ålesund in 1964 was “The fruits of the spirit,” and the focus was on Christian morals and Christian life. At the international assembly in Oslo in 1965, the focus was on the concept of “truth.” I experienced an Aha! moment when John 1:17 (NWT84) was discussed, “Because the Law was given through Moses, the undeserved kindness and the truth came to be through Jesus Christ.” How could the Law be the opposite of the truth? The point is that *alētheia* (“truth”) can have the meaning “reality.” So, the Law was the shadow (type), and the body casting the shadow (the antitype) was connected with Christ. And the focus here was God’s undeserved kindness. There was a strong focus on morals and simple truths at the assemblies and in the literature. But the deeper and more dramatic sides of the Bible accounts were particularly faith-strengthening.

*of many of the Lord's "other sheep." Such a clear and simple comparison has the hallmark of divine teaching.*⁶² (My italics and bold script.)

The following comments are pertinent: I have never seen anywhere in the Watchtower literature that the leading brothers in the past believed that “*every* character, event, and object described in the Bible foreshadows someone or something” (My italics.), as the article suggests.⁶³ I agree that teachers should be cautious when applying Bible accounts. But I see several problems in the new view where most accounts that previously were viewed as prophetic now are viewed as non-prophetic. We always need “***a clear Scriptural basis***” for our beliefs and our actions. But this requirement includes much more than the present GB believes, and the members of the GB themselves often do not follow this principle, as I showed in chapters 4, 5, and 6 and as I will show in the discussion below.

Excursus on “The position of God versus the position of the Governing Body”

In articles in the Watchtower in 1943 and 1946, it was stressed that God’s servants on earth were not the interpreters of the prophetic word. God was the interpreter when he fulfilled his prophecies and directed his earthly servants to understand these. This view was held for several decades.

The *meaning* of the prophetic word is, in many cases, no longer sought. But what the prophetic word *reminds* the members of the GB of is the focus. And these *reminders* are presented in *The Watchtower* and other literature instead of explanations of the meaning of the prophetic word. Thus, the understanding of the prophetic word is not directed by God. But this understanding in the form of the mentioned *reminders* springs out from human beings, from the minds of the members of the GB.

Questions from Readers in *The Watchtower* of March 15, 2015, page 18, elucidated the new view of the Bible. Regarding persons who are said to represent types, the article says:

62. *The Watchtower* of June 15, 2015, page 8.

63. *The Watchtower* of 1952, page 249, contradicts the claim by using the phrase “a host of” and not “every.” “Bible prophecies as they are preserved for us in the Scriptures contain a host of ‘typical representations’ in which clues or keys are found to aid in understanding their fulfillments. (Heb. 9:23, *NW*)”

However, even where the Bible indicates that someone is a type of someone else, we should not conclude that every detail or incident in the life of the type is a picture of something greater. For example, although Paul tells us that Melchizedek is a type of Jesus, Paul says nothing about the fact that on one occasion Melchizedek brought out bread and wine for Abraham to enjoy after he had defeated four kings. Hence, there is no Scriptural basis for finding a hidden meaning in that incident.—Gen. 14:1, 18. (My italics.)

The article refers to the allegorical interpretations of Augustin from Hippo and says:

If such interpretations seem far-fetched, you can understand the dilemma. *Humans cannot know which Bible accounts are shadows of things to come and which are not. The clearest course is this: Where the Scriptures teach that an individual, an event, or an object is typical of something else, we accept it as such. Otherwise, we ought to be reluctant to assign an antitypical application to a certain person or account **if there is no specific Scriptural basis for doing so.*** (My italics and bold script.)

How, then, can we benefit from the events and examples found in the Scriptures? At Romans 15:4, we read the apostle Paul's words: "All the things that were written beforehand were written for *our* instruction, so that through *our* endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures *we* might have hope." Paul was saying that his anointed brothers in the first century could learn powerful lessons from the events that were recorded in the Scriptures. However, God's people in every generation, whether of the anointed or of the "other sheep," whether living in "the last days" or not, could benefit—and have benefited—from **the lessons** taught in "all the things that were written beforehand."—John 10:16; 2 Tim. 3:1.

The point that humans cannot know which Bible accounts are shadows of things to come is well taken. However, both the leaders who argued in favor of many types and antitypes and the members of the present GB who argue against this, use Romans 15:4 as support for their view. Has someone overlooked something?

The text says that "*all the things* (*bosa*, "as many as; as much as") that were written beforehand were written for *our instruction* (*didaskalia*, "teaching")." The purpose of this is that "through the comfort of the Scriptures we might have *hope* (*elpis*)." Paul discusses hope in Romans, chapter 8:20, 21, 24, 25 (NWT13):

On the basis of hope that the creation itself will also be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of children of God.

For we were saved in this hope; but hope that is seen is not hope, for when a man sees a thing, does he hope for it? But if we hope for what we do not see, we keep eagerly waiting for it with endurance.

One definition of the Greek word *elpis* (“hope”) is “to look forward with confidence to that which is good and beneficial” (Louw and Nida). To what does the expression “this hope” in 8:24 refer? According to verse 23, the reference is to “the release from our bodies by ransom.” This accords with Paul’s words in 5:2: “and let us rejoice, based on hope of the glory of God.” This is the heavenly hope. The word “hope” refers to the future, and the words in 8:20, 21 refer to the earthly hope, “free from enslavement to corruption.”

So what is the “teaching” of “all the things that were written beforehand”? Is it, “simple, practical lessons about faith, endurance, godly devotion, and other vital qualities,” as the present GB says in *The Watchtower* March 15, 2015, page 10? These are valuable Christian attributes. But they are not connected with “hope,” the hope of a heavenly or earthly reward. But prophecies and prophetic types are connected with hope. Thus, Romans 15:4 speaks in favor of the prophetic element of “all the things that were written beforehand” and against the new view of the GB regarding types and antitypes.

Several examples below illustrate how the interpretations of the GB lack hope. One important example is the book *Pure Worship of Jehovah—At Last* (2019) that will be discussed in some detail. A few parts of the book of Ezekiel are taken as prophecies, and these give hope. But the GB views the accounts in a great part of the book of Ezekiel only as references to ancient Judah and Jerusalem in the past. Therefore, most of the text of the *Pure Worship* book is not an analysis and commentary on *the text of Ezekiel*, but expressions of what the text of Ezekiel *reminds* the GB of. This is the case with Ezekiel chapters 4–8, which describe the bad actions of unfaithful Jerusalem and its destruction. These chapters have no meaning for us today. But they *remind* us of different things according to the GB. But *these reminders* are subjective and allegorical. In contrast, the book *The Nations Shall Know That I Am Jehovah—How?* (1971), which discusses the book of Ezekiel, views Jerusalem as a type of Christendom. And the prophecy about the destruction of Christendom with following paradise earth certainly gives us hope.

"A CLEAR SCRIPTURAL BASIS" FOR PROPHECIES AND PROPHETIC TYPES

I definitely agree with the words of the GB that all our teaching must have *a clear Scriptural basis*, and I am sure that all the leading brothers who wrote articles about types and antitypes in the past also agreed with this. But a study of the literature indicates that the present GB's interpretation of *a clear Scriptural basis* is much too narrow. I include the following 10 points in the term "*a clear Scriptural basis*" in connection with identifying prophetic types:

1) Explicit declarations of prophetic types

Accounts, where it is explicitly said that texts represent types, such as Galatians 4:24 and Hebrews 7:1–3.

2) References to groups of prophetic types

Some accounts include descriptions of groups of events that are types. One example is Colossians 2:16, 17 (NWT84). Verse 17 says, "for those things are a shadow of the things to come, but the reality belongs to the Christ." The word "reality" is translated from the Greek word *sōma* ("body"). The point is that there is a body, and it casts a shadow. The shadow is the type, and the body is the antitype. What is the shadow? Three things are mentioned in verse 16, namely, "a festival" (*heortē*), "an observance of the new moon" (*neomēnia*), and "sabbaths" (*sabbatōn*). Here we have *a clear scriptural basis* for the conclusion that the Jewish festivals, the Festival of Unfermented Cakes, the Festival of Weeks, and the Festival of Booths, and the New Moon Festivals are types that refer to antitypical fulfillments. The GB does not accept these prophetic types, as I show below

3) Clues in other books of the Bible

There are many examples where the near context of an account does not say that the account represents a prophetic type. But persons or things in an account may be identified in other books as types. One example is Elijah. Malachi 4:5, Revelation 11:3–6, and Matthew 17:4 show that Elijah is a prophetic type.

It is true that everything that happened in the life of a person who is a prophetic type need not have an antitypical application. However, Revelation 11:5 tells that no rain would fall while the two witnesses, who

represent Elijah and Moses, were prophesying for 1,260 days. This shows that the accounts in 1 Kings chapters 17 and 18 represent prophetic types — including Elijah and the Baal priests. Revelation 11:6 tells about fire from heaven (2 Kings 1:1, 18), and this shows that the events that are described in chapter 1 are prophetic types.

4) Accounts with special or peculiar content

Believing in the inspiration of the Bible includes the view that all accounts in the Bible are included with a purpose. This is seen in 2 Peter 1:21 (NWT84), “For prophecy was at no time brought by a man’s will, but men spoke from God as they were borne along by holy spirit.” The word *profeteia* refers to word(s) inspired by God, whether they refer to the past, present, or future. This means that the words in the text of each book in the Bible were chosen by the influence of holy spirit. Therefore, all the words were chosen with a purpose, and they have definite meanings. We can draw the same conclusion from Romans 15:4 (NWT13). The verse says that “*all things* that were written beforehand” were written for “our instruction” that “we might have hope.” The verse shows that there are two important reasons why *all* the accounts were included in the Bible: In order to teach us and to give us hope; the accounts were not included for trivial reasons, such as being “filling material” or as general lessons.

Several books contain historical accounts. One important reason for the inclusion of these accounts is to have a setting for the nation of Israel and all the prophetic types that are connected with this nation. Another reason is to be able to follow the prophecies about the promised seed, the Messiah, through history, starting with the prophecies about Abraham’s seed.

But there are accounts whose existence cannot be explained on an historical background. I have already mentioned the Song of Solomon, which is a very clear example. In point 3 above, we saw that 2 Kings chapter 1 represents prophetic types. In chapter 2, there is a dramatic account of the separation of Elijah and Elisha when Elijah ascended to the heavens. This is a very special account, and given that *all* accounts are

included in the Bible with a particular purpose, this account must represent prophetic types.⁶⁴

The present GB is looking for “the simple, practical lessons about faith, endurance, godly devotion, and other vital qualities.” We find these qualities in the books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Psalms, and in several other books. But the existence of these qualities must not downplay the fact that the Bible is a prophetic book. Therefore, we must be looking for prophecies and prophetic types among the accounts that give us hope.

5) General expressions identify prophetic types

Please consider the following examples: Hebrews 10:1 (NWT84) says that “the Law has a shadow of good things to come, but not the very substance of the things.” The expression “the Law” refers to all the writings of Moses. The words do not show that every detail in the Law represents a type. But clearly, the words indicate that a great part of the Law represents types. One set of clear examples is found in the tabernacle. Please consider Hebrews 8:5 (NWT84):

But which [men] are rendering sacred service in a typical representation and a shadow of the heavenly things; just as Moses, when about to make the tent in completion, was given the divine command: For says he. “See that you make all things after [their] pattern that was shown to you in the mountain.

Also, narrative accounts included in the Law of Moses represent prophetic types. First Corinthians 10:6 (NWT84) says:

⁶ Now these things became our examples (*typos*, substantive), for us not to be persons desiring injurious things, even as they desired them.

The word “example” is translated from the Greek word *typos*, which, according to Mounce, means “an anticipative, figure, type”. The mentioned examples do not serve only as a warning but also as prophetic types. This is shown by the words in verse 2 that “all got baptized into Moses by means of the cloud and of the sea.” We also note that there is a time perspective. 1 Corinthians 10:11 (NWT84) says that the texts were written “as examples” and “for a warning to us upon whom the ends of the systems of things have arrived.” We are living in the last part of the wicked

64. The book *Let Your Name Be Sanctified* was criticized in *The Watchtower* of March 15, 2015. The points regarding Elijah and Elisha that are discussed above show that the explanation of the prophetic types in the book has a solid basis.

system of things, and therefore the prophetic types from the book of Numbers chapter 25 also point to our day.

The worldwide flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah are mentioned in Genesis, which is a part of “the Law.” Peter connects baptism with the flood (1 Peter 3:20, 21), and Jesus shows that the flood and the destruction of the cities on the plain foreshadow the destruction in the great tribulation. (Matthew 24:37–39; Luke 17:28–32)

Because of the words in Hebrews 10:1, there must be a great number of accounts in the Law where the prophetic nature is not mentioned in the close context.⁶⁵ This must be accounts that are special in the sense that they are not necessary for the regulation of the religious and secular life of the nation of Israel, which was the purpose of the Law. One example is the account of the cities of refuge and the blood avenger in Numbers chapter 35. (See pages 349-350)

6) The words about the restoration of all things

The apostle Peter gave a talk where he said about Jesus:

Whom heaven, indeed, must hold within itself until the times of restoration (*apokatastasis*) of all things of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets of old time. (Acts 3:21, NWT84)

The Greek word *apokatastasis* means according to Louw and Nida: “to change to a previous good state— ‘to restore, to cause again to be, restoration.’” What is necessary to change the earth to its “previous good state”? First of all, the wicked enemies of God must be removed, and second, the earth must be made into a paradise. This means that not only the words of the prophets that directly speak about a paradise earth are prophetic, but also the words about the destruction of God’s enemies. The members of the present GB do not seem to have realized what the word “restoration” means, and as far as I have seen, they only apply Acts 3:21

65. Three passages from the prophets, which we would not have taken as prophecies if the Christian Greek Scriptures had not said so, are: Zechariah 11:12–13—fulfillment in Matthew 27:9, 10; Jeremiah 31:15—fulfillment in Matthew 2:17, 18; Hosea 11:1—fulfillment in Matthew 2:15. Because we know that the Law “has a shadow of the good things to come,” we expect to find a great number of prophetic types there. The examples from the prophets illustrate that we must look carefully to find these prophetic types, also in accounts that at first sight do not seem to be prophetic.

to positive accounts about restoration and not to accounts dealing with the removing of God’s enemies.⁶⁶ When we realize the true meaning of “restoration,” a great number of accounts in the prophets, that the present GB does not view as prophetic, must be included in the term “restoration prophecies.”

7) Accounts connected with prophetic words in the prophets

When a narrative is sandwiched between two prophecies about the future, it may be taken as prophetic types, even when this is not explicitly stated. One example is the Assyrian attack on Israel in Isaiah, chapter 10.

8) Texts that are written down after their initial fulfillment must represent prophetic types

A number of prophecies in the books of the prophets were fulfilled on Israel and Judah. Some of these speak about the judgment and destruction of the land. The texts that were written down after the fulfillments on Israel and Judah, such as Ezekiel chapters 4–9, must represent prophetic types. This is so because there is no purpose of writing prophecies that the persons on which they were fulfilled did not know about. The only reason for these prophecies must be that the literal events that fulfilled them must be prophetic types with an antitypical fulfillment. Such prophecies are of the same nature as point 4, “Accounts with special contents.”

9) Persons and events that are said to be signs or portents

The word *mōfet* may be a token of a future event. In our context, this refers to a prophetic type. Isaiah and his sons were prophetic types (Isaiah 8:18; 20:3), and this is confirmed in Hebrews 2:13. Ezekiel was a prophetic type, as well. (Ezekiel 12:6, 11; 24:27) If we accept that Ezekiel was a prophetic type in the same way as Isaiah and his sons, the actions and appointments of Ezekiel must represent prophetic types for our time. One example is that Ezekiel was appointed as a watchman (Ezekiel 33:7), and in this function, he must be a prophetic type. But the GB does not accept this as a prophetic type. The high priest Joshua and his associates also were prophetic types (Zechariah 3:8).

66. The words about the dry bones coming to life in Ezekiel chapter 37 are taken as a restoration prophecy by the GB. But the destruction of unfaithful Jerusalem is not viewed as such a prophecy. *Pure Worship*, pages 114, 239. I will argue below that this is inconsistent.

10) Prophetic actions that is said to refer to the last days

Jehovah asked the prophet Hoshea to marry a woman who was loved by another man. This action was a prophetic type for events “in the last days.” (Hosea 3:5)

The present GB accepts, directly or indirectly, that five of the points above represent a clear Scriptural basis for taking an account as a prophetic type. This is an indirect admission that most of the texts that were taken as prophetic types in the 20th century have a clear Scriptural basis for being such types.

Which of the ten points above do the members of the GB accept as **a clear Scriptural basis**? They accept **point 1** “Explicit sayings,” and without saying it directly, their actions show that they also accept **point 4** “Accounts with special content.” The *Pure Worship* book (pages 172–180) takes the account about the marks on the foreheads (Ezekiel 9:1–11) as a prophetic type whose antitype is connected with the great tribulation (pages 389, 390 in this book). There is nothing in this account or in the context indicating that it is a prophetic type. So, the only reason to take it as such must be that the account is special; there is no reason why Jehovah would include this account in the book of Ezekiel if it was not a prophetic type.

Point 6 “The words about the restoration of all things” is also accepted. The *Pure Worship* book (pages 112–120) takes the vision about the dry bones that came to life (Ezekiel 37:1–14) as a prophetic type. The dry bones refer to “the whole house of Israel” (v. 11), and there is nothing in the context indicating that Israel is a type. But the reason for taking this account as a prophetic type is the words of Acts 3:21 about the restoration of all things. The prophecy about the dry bones speaks about restoration, and therefore it represents a prophetic type, is the argument. This prophecy also shows that the GB accepts my **point 3** “Clues in different books of the Bible.” The *Pure Worship* book (page 118) shows that there is a relationship between the prophecy about the dry bones and the two witnesses in Revelation 11:1–3, 7–13. Without admitting it, the *Pure Worship* book (page 66) accepts my **point 9**, “Persons and events that are said to be signs and portents.” Jehovah caused Ezekiel to become mute (3:26, 27; 33:21, 22), and this is applied to the beginning of the great tribulation when JW will become “mute” and not preach salvation anymore. The premise for this application is that Ezekiel is a prophetic type. (See pages 383–384 in this book.)

THE CITIES OF REFUGE AS PROPHETIC TYPES

The article “Stay in the ‘City of Refuge’ and Live!” in *The Watchtower* of November 15, 1995 discusses the antitypical application of the cities of refuge. The articles “Are You Taking Refuge in Jehovah” and “Imitate Jehovah’s Justice and Mercy,” in *The Watchtower* of November 2017 expresses a very different view, and it denies that the account of the cities of refuge represents prophetic types. The reason for this new view is stated as follows:

Beginning in the late 19th century, *The Watch Tower* drew attention to the prophetic significance of the cities of refuge. “This feature of the typical Mosaic law strongly foreshadowed the refuge which the sinner may find in Christ,” stated in the September 1, 1895, issue. “Seeking refuge in him by faith, there is protection.” A century later, *The Watchtower* identified the antitypical city of refuge as “God’s provision for protecting us from death for violating his commandment about the sanctity of blood.”

However, the March 15, 2015, issue of *The Watchtower* explained why our recent publications seldom mention prophetic types and antitypes: “Where the Scriptures teach that an individual, and event, or an object is typical of something else, we accept it as such. Otherwise, we ought to be reluctant to assign an antitypical application to a certain person or account if there is no specific Scriptural basis for doing so.” **Because the Scriptures are silent regarding any antitypical significance of the cities of refuge, this article and the next one emphasize instead the *lessons* Christians can learn from this arrangement.**

Both articles in *The Watchtower* of 2017 discuss in an excellent way how we can imitate Jehovah’s justice and mercy on the basis of his arrangement with the cities of refuge. But must we reject the view of the cities of refuge as prophetic types, which the Bible Students and JW held for 120 years?

If we follow the procedures of the GB in the *Worship Jehovah* book, we must conclude that the claim that “the Scriptures are silent” is not correct. For example, The *Worship Jehovah* book does not accept that unfaithful Jerusalem, as it is described in chapters 4–8 in Ezekiel, is a prophetic type of Christendom. But the book takes the account in chapter 9:1–11, where marks are put on the foreheads of sincere persons, as a prophetic type. And similarly, with the account in Ezekiel 37:1–14, about the dry bones that come to life—this is also taken as a prophetic type. As a matter of fact, nowhere do the Scriptures show that these two accounts are prophetic types. The dry bones in chapter 37 refer to “the whole house of

Israel” (v. 11). But the account is taken as a prophetic type because it speaks about restoration (point 6, pages 346, 347). I agree with that. The reason for taking the account of the marks on the foreheads as a prophetic type is not stated. But it must be because the account has so many special details (point 4, pages 344, 345) that it ought to be a prophetic type. I also agree with that.

I will now apply the points in the paragraph above to the cities of refuge. Hebrews 10:1 (NWT84) says: “The Law has a shadow of good things to come, but not the very substance of the things.” And John 1:17 shows that the Law is a type, and the truth (the antitype) came to be through Jesus Christ. These words include all the five books of Moses and show that a great part of these books are prophetic types (point 5, pages 345, 346).

In order to find the prophetic types in the books of Moses, we can also apply the principle of “accounts with special contents” (point 4, pages 344, 345). If Jehovah inspired the account of the cities of refuge only with the purpose of showing his righteous judgments and mercy, the situation could have been much less complicated. A simple situation could have been for the manslayer who unintentionally killed someone to go to the elders in the nearest city, and when they found that he was not guilty, he was free. A less simple situation would be for the manslayer to run to one of the cities of refuge. And when the elders there acquitted him, he was free. But the arrangement with the avenger of blood, that the acquitted manslayer could not go out of the boundaries of the city, and that he had to stay in the city until the high priest was dead, have nothing to do with Jehovah’s righteous judgments and mercy. These are special situations suggesting that the account represents a prophetic type, just as the special construction of the tabernacle. (Hebrews 8:5) The conclusion is that the reason for not viewing the account about the cities of refuge as a prophetic type in *The Watchtower* of 2017 is wrong, and the view that was held for 120 years is correct.

THE DEVALUATION OF THE SONG OF SOLOMON

The Song of Solomon is a very good example of the weakness of the new view of the Bible. This is a detailed account with many persons who act and speak, and the story is dramatic. There is nothing in this book saying that it contains a prophetic drama. And according to the new view of types

and antitypes, the persons and the actions cannot have a prophetic meaning as types and antitypes.

The songbook, *Sing praises to Jehovah* (1984), included the song “Shulamite—the anointed remnant” (Song. 6:13) as no 11. This shows that the book was viewed as a prophetic drama with types and antitypes. A Norwegian edition of this songbook was printed in 2007, and it also includes this song. However, the songbook, *Sing to Jehovah* (2009), does not include this song. This suggests that the GB applied the new view of types and antitypes to the Song of Solomon toward the end of the first decade of the 21st century. Corroborating this is the article “Jehovah’s Word is alive Highlights from the Song of Solomon” in *The Watchtower* of November 15, 2006, pages 17, 18, where we read.

As part of God’s Word, the message of the Song of Solomon is of great value for two reasons. (Hebrews 4:12) First, it teaches us what true love between a man and a woman is. Second, the song illustrates the type of love that exists between Jesus Christ and the congregation of anointed Christians.

The first point is clearly evident in the book; strong love is described. The second point does only make sense if the book is prophetic, and the shepherd is a type of Jesus, and the maiden is a type of the anointed Christians. This means that the devaluation of the Song of Solomon as a prophetic book occurred between 2007 and 2009.

The Watchtower of January 2015, pages 28–32, has the article, “Is unfaithful love possible?” dealing with the Song of Solomon. This article presents the book as a love story, showing that unfaithful love is possible. We can learn the importance of expressions of affection between a married couple. Unmarried persons can learn not to develop “a romantic attachment for anyone who comes along,” but “to wait patiently for the one he or she can truly love.” And during courtship, young persons can learn “to take necessary precautions to keep the relationship chaste.”

This means that most of the words, verses, and chapters in the book are just “filling material” that have no meaning for us today. But this collides with the words of Romans 15:4 that *all* the things that were written beforehand were written for our instruction, so we can have *hope*. Because of these words, I cannot believe that more than 90% of the Song of Solomon has no meaning for us. It also collides with 2 Peter 1:21. The whole book must have a special meaning, giving a special message. And the only alternative is that the drama represents prophetic types.

According to the new view of the Bible, most of the words, paragraphs, and chapters of the Song of Solomon have no meaning for us. Only some moral points can be learned from this book.

In contrast to the new view of the text of the Bible, I refer to Luke 20:37. The verse tells that Jesus found evidence for the resurrection of the dead in the “tense” of a verb;⁶⁷ a past meaning would prove nothing, but a present meaning would imply that a resurrection of the dead would occur. When Jesus found the small nuances in the text of the Bible to be so important, it is impossible for me to believe that most of the text of the eight chapters of Song of Solomon has no prophetic meaning. I cannot imagine that the book is only written to teach a few moral principles; it must have been written with a particular purpose. So, I believe that the exposition of the book, which is found in *The Watchtower* of December 1, 1957, pages 720–734, is excellent. This dramatic exposition gives understanding and hope, something that is not seen in the article of January 2015.⁶⁸

If anyone believes that every account in the Bible represents a type that has an antitype, that is an extreme viewpoint. But the very opposite, that we only can learn some moral lessons from books with a dramatic story is also an extreme viewpoint. This is, in reality, a devaluation of the Holy Scriptures.

To claim that the Song of Solomon is not a prophetic book but only a love story, as does the GB, is a devaluation of the text of the Bible.

67. There is no verb in the clause in Exodus 3:6 to which Jesus is referring. A clause without a verb is called “a nominal clause” and is common in Hebrew. In such clauses, the auxiliary verb “to be” is implied, usually with present meaning; thus, the meaning of the clause is ‘I *am* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,’ not ‘I *was* the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’

68. A detailed analysis of The Song of Solomon is found in the article “The Governing Body rejects the full inspiration of the Bible” in the category “The GB rejects the full inspiration of the Bible”

THE DEVALUATION OF THE BOOK OF LEVITICUS

The Watchtower of November 2019 has the article, “Lessons We Can Learn From the Book of Leviticus.” In the beginning, the article quotes 2 Timothy 3:16, “All Scripture is inspired of God and beneficial,” and it says, “Leviticus was written 3,500 years ago, yet Jehovah had it preserved ‘for our instruction.’ (Rom. 15:4)” The article discusses the following lessons that we can learn from the book:

- 1) We need to have Jehovah’s approval for our sacrifices to be accepted.
- 2) We serve Jehovah because we are grateful to him.
- 3) Out of love, we give Jehovah our best.
- 4) Jehovah is blessing the earthly part of his organization.

The points above are fine but trivial, and we can find similar points in many other books of the Bible. But these points do not give us any hope. Are these things all that we can learn? If we apply the words in Hebrews 7:27; 9:11, 12, and Colossians 2:16, 17, there are several prophetic types in the book of Leviticus where the details foreshadow greater things.

In contrast with the four points above, I will highly recommend the three articles “Atonement for the New World” Parts 1, 2, and 3, in *The Watchtower* of August 1, August 15, and September 1, 1942. In these articles, all the details of the antitypical fulfillment of the Day of Atonement that are described in Leviticus chapter 16 are discussed. And these details are compared with Hebrews chapters 7–10. In these articles, we find the four points mentioned above in passim. But they are put in the dramatic setting of Leviticus chapter 16. And this may give the reader a lasting impression of the force of Jehovah’s types and antitypes or shadows and the reality. And this exposition gives hope!⁶⁹

THE FESTIVALS AS PROPHETIC TYPES

As I already have mentioned, Romans 15:4 says that *all* the things that were written beforehand were written for our instruction. And Paul says explicitly that festivals and sabbaths represent a shadow of something that is related to Christ. (Colossians 2:16, 17)

69. Fine expositions of the Day of Atonement are found in *The Watchtower* of September 15, 2009, pages 26–28, and November 15, 2014, pages 10, 11.

There are several clues showing that the festivals represent prophetic types: Paul shows in 1 Corinthians 5:7, 8 that Jesus is the antitypical Passover lamb, and that he and the Corinthians should celebrate the antitypical Festival of Unfermented Cakes. Revelation 14:4 shows that the group of 144 000 are “the first-fruits,” and this expression can be associated with the Festival of Weeks (Pentecost). The great crowd is a group of God’s servants in addition to the smaller group of 144,000. They have palm branches in their hands, and this can be associated with the Festival of Booths. Thus, the Passover and the Festival of Unfermented cakes pointed to Jesus, the Festival of Weeks pointed to the gathering of the 144,000 servants of God, and the Festival of Booths pointed to the gathering of the great crowd.

The Watchtower of July 15, 1967, and March 1, 1998 discussed the antitypes of the festivals.

²⁰Then came the Passover and Festival of Unfermented Cakes of the significant year 33 C.E. On that Passover Day, Jesus was executed by his enemies and became the antitypical Passover Lamb, who died to take away “the sin of the world.” (John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7) Three days later, on Nisan 16, God resurrected Jesus with an immortal spirit body. This coincided with the offering of the first-fruits of the barley harvest as prescribed by the Law. Thus, the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ became “the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep in death.”—1 Corinthians 15:20.

²¹A truly outstanding festival was Pentecost in 33 C.E. On this day many Jews and proselytes were gathered in Jerusalem, including about 120 of Jesus’ disciples. While the festival was in progress, the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ poured out God’s holy spirit upon the 120. (Acts 1:15; 2:1–4, 33) They were thereby anointed and became God’s new chosen nation through the new covenant mediated by Jesus Christ. During that festival the Jewish high priest offered to God two leavened loaves made from the first-fruits of the wheat harvest. (Leviticus 23:15–17) These leavened loaves picture the 144,000 imperfect humans whom Jesus ‘bought for God’ to serve as “a kingdom and priests . . . to rule as kings over the earth.” (Revelation 5:9, 10; 14:1, 3) The fact that these heavenly rulers come from two branches of sinful mankind, Jews and Gentiles, may also be typified by the two leavened loaves.⁷⁰

²¹In course of time other features were added [to the Festival of Booths]. The Jews began to carry palm branches as a sign of joy and victory. Each morning a priest filled a golden vessel with water from the pool of Siloam and carried it to the temple, where trumpets were blown and the words of Isaiah 12:3

70. *The Watchtower* of March 1, 1998: 13.

were spoken: “With exultation you people will be certain to draw water out of the springs of salvation.” . . .

²³The Jews’ dwelling in booths during the festival pictured that the remnant and the “other sheep” consider their sojourn here in this old system of things as but a temporary abode, as they look forward to a permanent dwelling place, in heaven for the remnant and in a paradise on earth for the “other sheep.” . . . They know that Jesus’ sacrifice alone will bring real forgiveness of sin. The seventy bullocks sacrificed during the seven days of the festival indicate that Jesus’ sacrifice is complete, from a human and heavenly standpoint, and is for all mankind typified by the seventy generations named in Genesis, chapter ten. As a token of joy the Jews back there carried palm branches, and it is interesting that in Revelation 7, verse 9, the great crowd of people have palm branches in their hands. Certainly they have good reason to express their joy as they shout with a loud voice: “Salvation we owe to our God, who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb.”—Re 7 Vs. 10.⁷¹

In my view, the explanations of the two articles are balanced and convincing. It is impossible that all the different features of the Festivals have only a moral meaning. Why would Jehovah arrange for so many specific events in the festivals, such as the two leavened loaves offered to God at Pentecost and the 70 bullocks that were offered at the Festival of Booths, just to teach us some moral values? Clearly, all the principal features of the festivals have prophetic significance, as the two *Watchtower* articles that are quoted above show.⁷² And most important, the types and antitypes give us hope! (Romans 15:4)

THE SABBATHS AND THE JUBILEE AS PROPHETIC TYPES

Colossians 2:16, 17 shows explicitly that sabbaths were shadows of greater things that belong to Christ. This means that the sabbath years and the Jubilee year mentioned in Leviticus chapter 25 must have prophetic significance. I bring one quotation from the *Awake!* of October 8, 1971 page 27.

The things foreshadowed by the Law covenant lead us to the reality of God’s kingdom in the hands of his Son, Christ Jesus.

Colossians 2:16, 17 shows that the sabbath arrangement is included among those ‘shadows of things to come.’ According to that sabbath arrangement every seventh day was a day of rest from all labor. Also, every seventh year

71. *The Watchtower* of July 15, 1967, page 442.

72. A very fine exposition along the same lines as in the two quoted articles is found in *The Watchtower* January 1, 2007, pages 20–24.

was a year of rest for the land, with no plowing nor sowing being done. Thereby not only did the land have opportunity to renew its productive strength, but so did the people.—Ex. 20:8–11; Lev. 25:1–8.

What “good things” did this foreshadow? That sabbath arrangement foreshadowed grand blessings and relief for all mankind by means of Christ’s kingdom. The book of Revelation shows that, with the end of the present unrighteous order, Christ’s kingdom will bring in a thousand-year rule of peace and divine blessings. This will result in a sabbathlike rest for the earth and all its inhabitants. It will see mankind receive the full benefits of Christ’s ransom, bringing them eventually to full freedom from sin. It will also see the abysing of Satan and his demon forces, freeing mankind from their oppressive rule.—Rev. 20:1–6; 21:1–4.

If we apply the Bible statement that to Jehovah God ‘a thousand years is as one day,’ this would mean that the six thousand years of man’s existence are like just six days in God’s sight. (Ps. 90:2; 2 Pet. 3:8) The coming thousand-year reign of his Son would then be a seventh “day” following those six. It would fit perfectly the prophetic pattern of a sabbath period of rest following six periods of toil and labor. So, as we draw close to the completion of six thousand years of human existence during this decade, there is the thrilling hope that a grand Sabbath of rest and relief is indeed at hand. Then frustrating, wearisome pressures will end. In their place will be refreshing freedom and enjoyment of good.⁷³

The discussion of the *Awake!* accords very well with Paul’s words in Colossians 2:16, 17. That is not the case with the article “‘There Is an Appointed Time’ for Work and for Rest” in *The Watchtower* of December 2019, where the sabbath as a prophetic type is not accepted. The same magazine also discussed the Jubilee, and neither is the Jubilee as a prophetic type accepted. This is shown in the excursus below.

Excursus on the article, “Jehovah Provides for Your Liberty”⁷⁴

The Jewish Jubilee is discussed, and on page 12, we find the chart “Aspects of the Symbolic Jubilee.” The text says:

30 CE Jesus announces liberty in the synagogue of Nazareth. (Luke 4:21)

73. See also *Reasoning From the Scriptures* (1985, revised 1989), pages 350, 351.

74. *The Watchtower* of December 2019, pages 8–13.

33 CE The symbolic Jubilee begins with the anointing of Christ's followers. (Rom. 8:2, 15–17)

Today The anointed are enjoying many benefits of the symbolic Jubilee.

Millennium During the Thousand Year Reign of Christ, humans will experience restoration and liberation.

End of Christ's Millennial Reign The symbolic Jubilee ends, having completely liberated mankind from sin and death. (Rom 8:21)

The important question is: What is the meaning of the word “symbolic” in the expression “the symbolic Jubilee”? The question is pertinent because the GB has an aversion to types and antitypes, and the previous article about the Jewish sabbath does not say anything about the sabbath as a prophetic type.

The second and fifth paragraph in the article may illuminate the issue:

² We will examine a better jubilee, even better than the year-long festival that was proclaimed every 50 years in ancient Israel. That ancient Jubilee brought liberty to the people who observed it. Why is that of interest to us today? Because Israel's Jubilee year *reminds us* of a wonderful provision for lasting liberty that Jehovah is making now, liberty that Jesus spoke about. . . . (My italics.)

⁵ . . . we have reason to be interested in the Jubilee. Why? Because we can enjoy liberty, or freedom, that *reminds us* of what Jehovah set in place for the Israelites. (My italics.)

According to Paul, the sabbath cycles that included the Jubilee represent prophetic types whose antitypical fulfillments are connected with Christ. (Colossians 2:16, 17) The article ignores Paul's words, and the Jubilee is not applied as a prophetic type. But the article discusses what the Jubilee *reminds* the GB of. So, the word “symbolic” does not refer to the antitype of the Jubilee, although many readers will draw this conclusion. The word “**symbolic**” seems to be a synonym with the word “**reminder**.”

The article refers to Jesus' words in the synagogue in Nazareth, where he quoted Isaiah 61:1 (NWT13) “to proclaim liberty (*d^eroæer*) to the captives (*sz^ebūyim*); Luke 4:18 has the words, “to proclaim liberty (*afesis*) for the captives (*aichmalōtos*).” No part of the words of Jesus focuses on the Jubilee. Both the Hebrew and the Greek word for “captives” refer to those who were taken captive in war. But those who were liberated in

the Jubilee were all who served as slaves for the Israelites, and all people in the land. The article says that “the symbolic Jubilee” began in 33 CE when “Jehovah anointed with holy spirit the apostles and other faithful men and women.” (¶12).

However, after quoting the words of Isaiah about liberty to the captives, Jesus said, “Today this scripture that you just heard is fulfilled.” (Luke 4:21, NWT13). Therefore, Jesus’ words could not refer to the “symbolic Jubilee,” which is supposed to have begun in 33 CE, three years later. Moreover, when the horn sounded on the tenth day of the seventh month, on the day of atonement, that would “proclaim liberty in the land to *all* its inhabitants.” (Leviticus 25:9, 10) This does not fit the day of Pentecost in the year 33 CE when only a few persons were anointed with holy spirit. But it fits perfectly the Thousand Year Reign of Jesus when all the billions of humans in the whole earth will get perfect liberty.

The article shows that the members of the GB do not follow their own principles. *The Watchtower* of June 15, 2015, page 8, says that only when there is ***a clear Scriptural basis*** will the GB accept an account as a prophetic type. In connection with sabbath cycles, including the Jubilees, there is ***a clear Scriptural basis*** (Colossians 2:16, 17). But the GB does not accept that.

In contrast with the discussion of the Jubilee in *The Watchtower* of December 2019, as seen in the excursus above, the comments below from *The Watchtower* of August 1, 1976, pages 454 and 455, accord very well with Paul’s words in Colossians 2:16, 17.

Yes, God purposes a much larger and finer “Jubilee” for humankind. This “Jubilee,” symbolically, is the thousand-year reign of his kingdom under Christ. The present oppressive system, with its alliance of false religion, politics and commerce will not be there. Why not? Because God will establish his rule earth wide. He says of this time: “Look! *The tent of God is with mankind*, and he will reside with them, and they will be his peoples. And God himself will be with them. And he will wipe out every tear from their eyes, and death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore. The former things have passed away.”—Rev. 21:3, 4.

This “Jubilee” will not accomplish just a temporary freedom, leaving mankind to slip back into trouble, or needing repetition periodically as did the Hebrew Jubilee. This is because Jesus Christ will be, not only King, but also humankind’s High Priest. His atonement sacrifice will be applied to lift men

and women up to perfection of mind and body. They will be saved 'to perfection.' Of Christ as High Priest, it is said: "He is able also to save *completely* those who are approaching God through him, because he is always alive to plead for them." (Heb. 7:25; 1 Cor. 15:26) Each person will be able to enjoy a portion of the earth to keep and to cultivate. He will not fear economic failure.

The symbolic "Jubilee" will provide a real rest for mankind. For the ancient Jubilee was a sabbath year, and "sabbath" means "rest." (Lev. 25:11, 12) Full relief and cure will come, even a resurrection of the dead, as Christ demonstrated in a miniature way when he was on earth, by healing people of all kinds of sicknesses, also raising the dead. (Matt. 15:30, 31; Luke 5:12–16; 7:12–15; John 11:38–44) The Bible description of this feature of the "Jubilee" reads: "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and scrolls were opened. But another scroll was opened; it is the scroll of life. And the dead were judged out of those things written in the scrolls according to their deeds [deeds performed during the 'Jubilee']."—Rev. 20:12, 13.

I will first look at the antitypical sabbath. The creation account in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 speaks of six days of creation, and a seventh day when God rested. Hebrews chapters 3 and 4 show that God continued to rest at the time when the epistle was written. According to Hebrews 3:18, the Jews who went out of Egypt were invited to come into the Promised Land and rest together with Jehovah. But they did not accomplish this because they lacked faith and acted disobediently. In 4:1, 2, we learn that just as the Jews heard the good news of the invitation to enter into God's rest, similar good news with an invitation to enter God's rest was declared to Paul and the Hebrews. Verse 4 shows that those who have faith will enter into the rest of God, and because of their faith, they will rest from dead works (9:14). They have the ransom sacrifice of Jesus, and therefore it is not necessary to strive hard to keep the Mosaic law that was impossible to keep in a perfect way. (Galatians 3:10; Romans 10:3)

That Christians entered God's rest by faith, is that the final fulfillment of the antitypical sabbath? According to Hebrews 4:9 the answer is No. The verse says, "So there remains a sabbath resting for the people of God." (NWT84) The rendering "sabbath resting" is excellent, because the Greek word *sabbatismos* is an abstract substantive. This means that the word does not refer to a future time period, for example, to the Thousand Year Reign of Jesus. But the word refers to *the state* of "resting on the sabbath." The sabbath resting "remains." The Greek word is *apoleipomai*, and

according to Louw and Nida its basic meaning is “continue to exist.” This shows that God’s day of rest continued beyond the time when Paul and the Hebrews had entered God’s rest. And the possibility of entering God’s rest would “continue to exist.”⁷⁵

But how long would God continue to rest? A comparison between the genealogy of Jesus back to Adam in Luke 3:23–38 and the ages of the different men in Genesis shows that Adam was created in 4026 BCE. The rest day of God started after Eve was created, which is undated. Today there are 6,047 years since Adam was created. Because Eve was created after Adam and her creation is undated, this means that God’s rest day has lasted *around* 6,000 years. Because we live in the last generation of this wicked system of things, and we know that the Thousand Year Reign will start in the near future, we understand that God’s day of rest is 7,000 years long. What does that mean?

The comments in *The Watchtower* of 1976 that are quoted above are logical for the following reasons: Paul says explicitly that the sabbaths of the Jews foreshadowed bigger things. Matthew 12:8 (NWT84) says, “For Lord of the sabbath is what the Son of man is.” Jesus was under the Law (Galatians 4:4), and therefore he could not be Lord over the Jewish Sabbath. So, “the sabbath” must have referred to something else.⁷⁶ The only candidate that I can see is his Thousand Year Reign, which can be viewed as a sabbath relative to the 7000-year-length of God’s day of rest. We must always take some reservations in connection with the application of prophetic texts. But it is clear that the sabbaths were types of something, and I have never seen any suggestion regarding the antitype that is more logical than the Thousand Year Reign of Jesus.

Let us now take a closer look at the sabbath and Jubilee cycles. The articles in *The Watchtower* of December 2019 discuss what the sabbath and the Jubilee can *remind us* of. However, there are three sides connected with the sabbaths and the Jubilees that must be much more than reminders.

First, there were sabbath cycles of both days and years. The weekly sabbath teaches us that there is a time to work and a time to rest, as the first article in *The Watchtower* of December 2019 shows. While this is what

75. Very fine discussions of how to enter God’s rest are found in *The Watchtower* of July 15, 1998 and July 15, 2011.

76. An example of using something that is literal to point to something spiritual is found at John 2:19–21.

Jehovah wants to teach us with the weekly sabbath, why did he also arrange for yearly sabbaths with the release of Hebrew slaves and the debts of the Jews? (Deuteronomy 15:1–3, 12) This was a special arrangement inside the Law and, therefore, it was included in the Bible with a particular purpose.

Second, in the sabbath year, the land was not cultivated, and there was no sowing, pruning, or gathering of crops. But what grew of itself, the owner of the field and his slaves could eat. This was again a special arrangement that was instituted with a particular purpose.

Third, the Jubilee followed the 49th year, which was a sabbath year. This means that the 49th and 50th year represented two years following each other with rest, with the high point on the Day of Atonement in the 50th year, when liberty was proclaimed throughout the land. The cycle itself does not teach us any moral values. But Paul explicitly says that the sabbath cycles represented prophetic types.

The Jubilee was a time for rejoicing. All land inheritances that had been sold were returned to their owners, and Hebrew slaves got their freedom. This was the case even if they had not served their masters for six years. (Leviticus 25:8–13, 39–41) This situation fits the words of Paul in Romans 8:20, 21 (NWT13):

²⁰ For the creation was subjected to futility, not by its own will, but through the one who subjected it, on the basis of hope ²¹ that the creation itself will also be set free from enslavement to corruption and have the glorious freedom of the children of God.

When will the creation be free from enslavement to corruption? That will be during the Thousand Year Reign of Jesus. This substantiates the comments in the quoted article above that the antitypical Jubilee is the Thousand Year Reign of Jesus Christ.

But what about the time-frame of 49 and 50 years? *The Watchtower* of January 1, 1987, has some interesting points under the heading “Questions From Readers.” We must remember that the Sabbath day when God rested was the seventh day of the week of creation presented in Genesis chapter 1. The article argues that each creative day must have been of the same length as the Sabbath day—this is the case in a literal week. When we know that the sabbath is 7,000 years long, the other days must be of equal length. If we agree that the Thousand Year Reign of Jesus is the seventh millennium of God’s day of rest, we have the same setting as the sabbath years leading to the Jubilee. Thus, the creation week

was 49,000 years long, and the last thousand years is the Thousand Year Reign of Jesus Christ. If this reasoning is correct, it means that the Thousand Year Reign is both the antitypical 49th sabbath year and the Jubilee year, with full liberty for all on the “Day of Atonement” at the end of the thousand years.

It is essential to keep the type and the antitype separated. Genesis chapter 1 speaks of the creation week of seven days, and *conceptually* speaking, all the days of a week are of equal length. This is the type. When we look at Bible history, we find that the seventh day is 7,000 years long, and the antitypical Sabbath is 1,000 years long. On this basis, the creation week *conceptually* is 49,000 years long. The point I try to stress is that the length of the creation days in solar years is not important. But the creation week is *conceptually* speaking presented as a week with days of equal length. Thus, when the seventh day is 7,000 years long, the other days must, according to the pattern, *conceptually* be 7000 years long as well.⁷⁷

As in connection with the application of any prophecy, there may be errors. However, Romans 15:4 shows that the words about the Jubilee cycle in Leviticus 25: 8–13 were written with a purpose. And I have never heard any explanation that can fully account for this cycle except the explanation above. And this explanation definitely gives hope!

It is possible that the Jubilee cycle of 49 years foreshadows the creation week of 49,000 real or conceptual years, and that the Jubilee foreshadowed the Thousand Year Reign of Jesus.

PROPHETIC TYPES IN THE BOOKS OF THE PROPHETS

A prophecy is a word that is inspired by God, and it can refer to the past, present, or future. This means that we cannot at the outset know that

77. The sedimentary rocks on the earth with their fossils must represent days three, four, five, and six of the creation week when plants and animals were created. Geologists believe that these rocks are hundreds of millions of years old. The sedimentary rocks were formed by small pieces of igneous rocks, and possibly by material from space. The pieces of igneous rocks and the supposed material from space may be millions of years old. But there is nothing in the sedimentary rocks that would contradict the possibility that they—the *sedimentary rocks*—are less than 49,000 years old, and the creation week consists of 49,000 literal solar years. Evidence in connection with the ages of rocks is presented in Furuli, *Can We Trust the Bible? With Focus on the Creation Account, the Worldwide Flood, and the Prophecies*, pages 26–102.

words in one of the books of the prophets represent prophetic types that will be fulfilled in the time of the end. Therefore, we also need **a clear Scriptural basis** in connection with the words of the prophets. I will give some examples.

How should we understand the words of Isaiah 65:17, 21–25 (NWT13)?

¹⁷ For look! I am creating new heavens and a new earth; and the former things will not be called to mind, nor will they come up into the heart. . . .

²¹ They will build houses and live in them, and they will plant vineyards and eat their fruitage. ²² They will not build for someone else to inhabit, nor will they plant for others to eat. For the days of my people will be like the days of a tree, and the work of their hands my chosen ones will enjoy to the full. ²³ They will not toil for nothing, nor will they bear children for distress, because they are the offspring made up of those blessed by Jehovah, And their descendants with them. ²⁴ Even before they call out, I will answer; while they are yet speaking, I will hear. ²⁵ The wolf and the lamb will feed together, the lion will eat straw just like the bull, and the serpent's food will be dust. They will do no harm nor cause any ruin in all my holy mountain," says Jehovah.

Do these words represent prophetic types with a fulfillment in our future? These words of Isaiah were fulfilled when the Jews returned from Babylon. But is this all? We find a pattern among some prophets of two fulfillments of prophecies. For example, the words in Habakkuk 1:5–8 were fulfilled when the Babylonians captured Judah and Jerusalem. But Acts 13:41 shows that this is not the only fulfillment of these words. The words of the prophet Joel in 2:28–32 (3:1–5 in some translations) were fulfilled in the first century CE, according to Acts 2:16–21. However, Peter connects the words of Joel with “the last days” (verse 17), and therefore, there must come a bigger fulfillment. This accords with Joel 3:1–21 (3:6–26 in some translations) where God's final judgment is described. The two examples above show that prophetic types may have more than one fulfillment. But that is not always the case, so we need **a clear Scriptural basis**.

I will now return to Isaiah 65:21–25 and the discussions of *The Watchtower* of August 15, 1972 (first quotation) and *Awake!* of April 8, 1974, page 13 (second quotation).

[1] Another prophecy, that of Isaiah 65:17, concerning God's creating “new heavens and a new earth,” was not proclaimed by Isaiah for the Jews merely

to hear as something to be fulfilled some 2,700 years in the future. Rather, it had a first fulfillment about 200 years after it was first recorded, when the exiled Israelites were restored to Jerusalem. A new ruling body provided by Jehovah with Zerubbabel as governor and Joshua as high priest constituted “new heavens” and the land of Judah was repopulated with an organized people, constituting a “new earth.” In this restoration, no more did an enemy like Nebuchadnezzar come in to kill infants and young children, and men lived their normal life-span. They built houses and planted vineyards in security, without fear that the enemy would again come in and desolate their land as the Babylonians had done in 607 B.C.E. (Isa. 65:20–22) This was a meaningful fulfillment for those Israelites back there. They could act with faith on Isaiah’s prophecy to their own good.

God loved his people back there and remembered them in their captive state in Babylon. He acted to restore them from captivity and to bless them in their own land. What occurred with them is said by the apostle Paul to be pictorial of greater things. (1 Cor. 10:11) Consequently we know that in God’s great love for the Christian congregation, ‘spiritual Israel,’ he would deliver them from their enemies. In the first century he delivered a remnant of faithful Jews, bringing them into the Christian congregation that was established at Pentecost. (John 8:31–36; Acts 2:41, 47) Likewise, in these “last days,” God has shown the same love in restoring spiritual Israel from captivity to Babylon the Great, the world empire of false religion. He has progressively restored to them the truths and practices of the early Christian congregation and has prospered them in releasing others from religious bondage. Thus there has been a threefold fulfillment of Bible prophecy concerning deliverance of Jehovah’s people from Babylon.

The apostle Peter corroborates this understanding that there is more than one fulfillment when he makes a future application of the prophecy of Isaiah 65:17, in connection with Christ’s rule. Writing to spiritual Israel of his day, Peter says: “*There are new heavens and a new earth that we are awaiting according to his promise, and in these righteousness is to dwell.*” (2 Pet. 3:13) Also the book of Revelation, written to spiritual Israel about 96 C.E., envisions “a new heaven and a new earth” for mankind’s benefit, security and blessing in God’s new order under Christ’s Kingdom rule.—Rev. 21:1–4. (My italics.)

[2] *Past Acts of God Assure Paradise Conditions for Earth*

But what about the reality under God’s Messianic government? God did those good things for his people back there when they listened to him. He will do them on a much larger, permanent scale for those who hear and believe his promises today, for he purposes to have a paradise earth, a real new set of conditions that will last forever.

Jesus spoke to an evildoer dying next to him about this paradise into which the evildoer would be resurrected. *This man, though being justly executed for some*

crime, expressed faith in Christ's coming kingdom, and this prompted Jesus Christ to promise that he would have opportunity for life there.—Luke 23:39–43. (My italics.)

Most references in our literature to the prophecy in Isaiah chapter 65 just state without any evidence that the words will be fulfilled in the paradise earth. However, the articles quoted above represent interactive learning. They show that Peter quoted the words of Isaiah 65:17 and applied the words about new heavens and a new earth to the future. Also, Jesus promised the evildoer a resurrection in a future “paradise.”

Isaiah 11:6–9 describes a situation that is similar to the one described in 65:25: “wild” and “tame” animals will live together. The reference to animals is symbolic because 11:9 shows that the reason why different animals will stay together is that “the earth will be filled with the knowledge of Jehovah.” This knowledge will not influence animals. But it will influence the personalities of humans. Thus, when the Jews returned to their land, persons who had been like wolves would now behave like lambs.⁷⁸

The evidence for a second and literal fulfillment is found in the quotations above. Isaiah and the people living in his days had never seen “wild” and “tame” animals dwelling together. The descriptions in Isaiah 11:6–8 and 65:25 are taken from the first paradise. When Jesus tells that there will be an earthly paradise, the situation in that paradise must be the same as the situation in the first paradise. Therefore, the words about the animals must have a literal fulfillment. This is confirmed by Peter, who quotes the words about new heavens and a new earth in Isaiah 65:17 and applies them to the future. (2 Peter 3:13) The discussion shows that we have ***a clear Scriptural basis*** for viewing the words from Isaiah chapters 11 and 65 as prophecies, or types, that will be fulfilled in the future paradise.

The words about “wild” and “tame” animals being together will have a literal fulfillment in the future paradise because

78. The verb used in the clause dealing with the wolf and the lamb in 11:6 is *gūr*. According to Koehlenberger and Mounce, the meaning of the verb is “live as an alien; dwell as a stranger.” The NWT 84 renders the clause as “And the wolf will actually reside for a while with the male lamb.” This rendering is excellent. *The Watchtower* of September 15, 1991, shows that the wolf and the lamb will have distinct habitats. But temporarily, they may dwell together.

- The description is taken from the first paradise, and Jesus says in Luke 23:43 that an earthly paradise will be restored. The restored paradise will be similar to the first paradise.
- Peter quotes the words of new heavens and a new earth in Isaiah 65:17 and applies them to the future. Isaiah 65:21–25 and 11:6–9 must, therefore, have a literal fulfillment in the future paradise.

THE ASSYRIANS AS PROPHETIC TYPES

But what about accounts in the books of the prophets that are not applied to the future in the Christian Greek Scriptures? Take for example the articles, “The Ax and the Chopper” and “The Coming Deliverance from the Anti-religious ‘Ax’” in *The Watchtower* of January 15, 1976, and *Isaiah’s prophecy—Light for All Mankind I* (2000), chapter 12. (Isaiah 10:1–34) The articles and the book use the Assyrian invasion and Hezekiah and Sennacherib as types. Must this view be rejected?

Is there any **clear scriptural basis** for the prophetic view of these articles? Isaiah 10:20–23 is quoted in Romans 9:27, 28, and this indicates that the words about the Assyrian would have another fulfillment much later than the 8th century BCE. Moreover, the words about the Assyrian in chapter 10 are found in the middle of prophecies about the Messiah and his Kingdom. (Isaiah 9:6, 7; 11:1–10) This also suggests that the Assyrian represents a type having an antitype. (See point 7, page 347) But what about Hezekiah and Sennacherib? Do they represent types having antitypes, like Melchizedek in Hebrews 7:1–9? I cannot imagine that the words about the Assyrian only represent history and that the account only represents a moral lesson. A great number of the accounts in the prophets do not contain **a clear Scriptural basis** in their *near* context that indicates that they represent types or prophecies; however, if we can accept that their standing between prophetic accounts shows that they also are prophecies, then they become more than only a moral lesson. If we do not accept this, the prophets in the Bible are crippled as far as their prophetic significance is concerned. And again, prophetic applications of the words of the prophets give the readers hope!

THE ACCOUNT OF NABOTH

I will now return to the account about Naboth (1 Kings 21:1–29), the example of a non-prophetic account used in the article in *The Watchtower* of March 15, 2015. The focus of the account is not how Naboth kept his integrity, as the article in *The Watchtower* says. But the focus is on how two persons with great power caused the death of a righteous man, in order to take possession of his vineyard, and how they were sentenced to death because of their actions.

In point 3) on pages 343, 344, I show that Elijah is a prophetic type and that the accounts in 1 Kings chapters 17 and 18, and 2 Kings chapter 1 represent prophetic types as well. The punishment of Ahab in chapters 17 and 18 is that no rain would fall before Elijah said that it will come. However, the punishment described in 1 Kings 21:19–26 is much more severe. Elijah says that both Ahab and Jezebel will be killed. And the fulfillment of this prophecy is described in chapter 21.

The account of Naboth, Elijah, Ahab, and Jezebel stands between the prophetic types in 1 Kings chapters 18 and 19, and 2 Kings chapter 1. This alone would suggest that the account in chapter 21 is a prophetic type. Moreover, this is the most important account in the relationship between Elijah, Ahab, and Jezebel because of the death sentence of the two enemies of Jehovah.⁷⁹ Both of the mentioned facts speak in favor of the account being a prophetic type.

That this dramatic account is included in the Holy Scriptures only to remind us of the integrity of Jesus, the anointed remnant, and the great crowd does not make sense in my view. It is much more logical that Jezebel is a type of the clergy of Christendom, Ahab is a type of nationalistic nations, and Naboth is a type of the anointed remnant in God's spiritual vineyard, as "*Let Your Name Be Sanctified*" says on pages 324 and 325.

To illustrate how types and antitypes are widespread and how they are used, I refer to Ahithophel. He was David's personal adviser, but he became a traitor and joined Absalom in a coup against the king. Regarding him, David's wrote in Psalm 41:9 (NWT13):

79. The account of Elijah and Elisha, when Elijah was taken up to heaven (2 Kings 2:1–14), is also very important. Both the situation and the conversations between Elijah and Elisha are special (point 4, pages 344, 345), and therefore the account must represent prophetic types.

Even the man at peace with me, one whom I trusted, who was eating my bread, has lifted his heel against me.

We would hardly have taken Ahitophel and his actions as a prophetic type. But in John 13:18 (NWT13) Jesus says with reference to Judas Iscariot, who was one of Jesus' closest associates and who became a traitor:

I am not talking about all of you; I know the ones I have chosen. But this was so that the scripture might be fulfilled: "The one who was eating my bread has lifted his heel against me."

The situation is not that Ahitophel *reminds us* of Judas. But Jesus' use of the word *plēroō* ("fulfill") shows that David was a type of Jesus and Ahitophel was a type of Judas. There is no doubt that the Hebrew Scriptures contain "a host of typical representations," as *The Watchtower* of 1952 says (note 63).

Excursus on the article, "An Attack Coming From the North"⁸⁰

This article is another example of the rejection of prophetic types. At the beginning of the "Attack" article (page 2, ¶2), the brothers who wrote articles on Joel in 1992, 1998, and 2009 are criticized: they did not take the context into account.

To understand a prophecy correctly, we generally have to consider its context. If we focus on only one aspect of the prophecy and ignore the rest, we may draw the wrong conclusion. In hindsight, it seems that this has been the case with a prophecy in the book of Joel.

However, it is clear to me that it is the author of the "Attack" article who has ignored the context and the prophetic nature of the book of Joel. I will first discuss the locust plague and then the outpouring of the spirit.

The locust plague

The Watchtower of April 15, 2009, page 18, says:

¹⁵ The prophet Joel compared the activity of Jehovah's servants to the actions of locusts. He wrote: "Like powerful men they run. Like men of war they go up a wall. And they go each one in his own ways, and they do not alter their paths. And one another they do not shove. As an able-bodied

80. *The Watchtower* of April 2020, 2–7.

man in his course, they keep going; and should some fall even among the missiles, the others do not break off course.”—Joel 2:7, 8.

¹⁶ How well this prophecy describes modern-day proclaimers of God’s Kingdom.

The Watchtower of April 2020, page 2, ¶4 says:

⁴ If we restricted ourselves to a reading of Joel 2:7–9, a case could be made for that explanation [quoted above]. However, when we consider the prophecy in its context, we see that a different understanding is appropriate. Let us examine four reasons why this is so.

I will now discuss the four reasons. According to the “Attack” article, “the northerner” in Joel 2:20 is identical to the locusts (page 3, ¶5). The argument is: If the locusts represent God’s people, why should Jehovah drive them away? The “northerner” is identified as the locusts that represent the Babylonian army (page 5, ¶11). We cannot know the identity of “the northerner” because the context does not tell anything about his identity. One commentary says:

[This is] a term that has been understood variously. When the term is interpreted in the light of the context and structure of chapter 2, the most adequate view sees it as referring to a foreign invader (i.e., the Assyrians) descending from the north.⁸¹

It is likely that “the northerner” refers to a nation represented by its king. Because the book of Joel was written around 800 BCE, it is more likely that “the northerner” refers to the Assyrians, who destroyed the ten-tribe kingdom in 740 and also attacked Judah, than to the conquest by the Babylonians in 607.

The application of “the northerner” to the Babylonians has one serious problem because 2:20 (NWT13) says: “I will drive the northerner far away from you.” These words do not fit the Babylonians in 607 BCE, because they conquered Jerusalem. However, the Assyrian king Sennacherib attacked Jerusalem in 732 BCE, and his army was driven away when an angel killed 185,000 of his soldiers.

The most problematic part with the 2020 article is the claim that “the northerner” is identical to the locusts, which again represent the Babylonian army. It is likely that the locusts are identical to the

81. Patterson, *Joel*, page 253.

“numerous and mighty” people mentioned in 2:2–11 and to the “nation” mentioned in 1:6, 7.⁸²

REASON 1: The crucial point is the claim that “the northerner” is identical with the locusts, who represent the Babylonian army. There is nothing in the context that connects “the northerner” with the locusts. But there are strong reasons contradicting the view that the locusts represent the Babylonian army. Here the author of the “Attack” article has done exactly what he accuses previous *Watchtower* expositors of having done. He has not taken the context into account.

What is the setting of chapter 2:1–11? It is *Jehovah’s day*, and this day did not come in 607 BCE, but it will come in the future. The verses show that the army of locusts is Jehovah’s army (2:11), and this army is moving before Jehovah’s day. This supports the view that the locusts are a type of his Witnesses, who preach the good news in the time of the end.

REASON 2: The argument is that the locusts must refer to Babylonian soldiers because 2:25 says that Jehovah will compensate for the eating of the locusts. If these words refer to kingdom preachers, the message they proclaim causes damage, and this is not correct, is the argument. The prophecy of Joel is made up of different sequences that are not chronological. This is the pattern we see in the other prophets and in Revelation. In 2:1–11, Jehovah’s future day and his army are described, but the sequence of 2:12–27 refers to Joel’s time.

In 2:12, Jehovah spoke to the people in Joel’s day and admonished them to return to him, and verses 2:13–17 tell how the people and the priest can show repentance. Then Jehovah says that he will be zealous for his people (verse 18). He will again send grain, new wine, and oil (verse 19), and he will drive away the attacking army (verse 20). Verses 22 to 26 speak about a change for the better: the wilderness will become green (verse 22); spring rain and autumn rain will come as before (verse

82. Please note that the four Hebrew perfects in 1:6, 7 have future reference and should be translated with English future. See Furuli, *The Fallacy of Prophetic Perfect — With Translations of Verses from the Prophets*, page 265.

23); there will be a compensation for what the locusts have eaten (verse 25);⁸³ and everyone will eat to satisfaction (verse 26).

We should note that Jehovah, in a literal way, speaks of a restoration of good things in the land. This suggests that locusts in a literal way had devastated the land, and now the land would get compensation for that, as the verses describe. The author of the Attack-article confuses the prophecy expressed in symbols in 2:1–11, with the literal restoration mentioned in 2:19–27. Thus, the compensation does not refer to Jehovah’s army, but evidently to a literal locust plague that had occurred.

REASON 4: The “Attack” article argues that the locusts cannot refer to the Christians who are pictured by the locusts in Revelation 9:1–11, because there are differences between the descriptions of Joel and Revelation. This is a weak argument because the setting of the two descriptions is different, and the same situation is often described in different ways by different books in the Bible. The use of locusts in a prophetic setting is rare. And the fact that locusts are mentioned both by Joel and by Revelation suggests that there is a similarity between the two accounts.

The outpouring of the spirit

REASON 3: This is the reference to the outpouring of God’s spirit. And here again, there is confusion. A new sequence starts in 2:28 and ends in verse 32. We read (page 3, ¶7):

Did you notice that Jehovah says: “**After that** I will pour out my spirit”; that is, after the locusts have completed their assigned task? If the locusts are preachers of God’s kingdom, why would Jehovah pour out his spirit on them **after** they finish their witnessing? (The author’s italics and bold letters.)

It is impossible that the words “after that” can refer to the work of the locusts. If that were the case, the outpouring had to occur after Jehovah’s day because this day is the setting of 2:1–11. A new sequence describing the restoration of the land starts in 2:19 and ends in verse 27. Therefore, the word “that” in the phrase “after that” must refer to this

83. We note that verse 25 speaks about “the years” when the locusts had eaten. The Babylonian soldiers did not stay in Jerusalem for “years,” and therefore the locusts cannot represent these soldiers.

sequence and the literal restoration of the land. These words have nothing to do with the locusts.

The real meaning of the words “after that” is no mystery because Peter interpreted these words on the day of Pentecost in 33 CE. He showed that the words “after that” refers to “the last days.” (Acts 2:19) Peter lived in these “last days” of the Jewish system of things, and this was a long time after (“after that”) the restoration of the land that Joel spoke about in 2:19–27.

Regarding the outpouring of the spirit, *The Watchtower* of May 1, 1992, page 13, ¶16, says:

¹⁶ Jehovah tells his Witnesses: “You people will have to know that I am in the midst of [spiritual]. Israel, and that I am Jehovah your God and there is no other.” (Joel 2:27) His people came into this precious realization when Jehovah began to fulfill his words at Joel 2:28, 29: “It must occur that I shall pour out my spirit on every sort of flesh, and your sons and your daughters will certainly prophecy.” This happened at Pentecost 33 C.E., when Jesus’ assembled disciples were anointed “and they all became filled with holy spirit.” In the power of holy spirit, they preached, and in one day, “about three thousand souls were added.”—Acts 2:4, 16, 17, 41.

¹⁷ On that happy occasion, Peter also quoted Joel 2:30–32: “I will give portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun itself will be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and fear-inspiring day of Jehovah. And it must occur that everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will get away safe.” Those words had a partial fulfillment when Jerusalem was destroyed in 70 C.E.

¹⁸ There would, however, be a further application of Joel 2:28–32. Indeed, this prophecy has had remarkable fulfillment since September 1919. At that time a memorable convention of Jehovah’s people was held in Cedar Point, Ohio, U.S.A. God’s spirit was clearly manifest.

The “Attack”- article says that the fulfillment of Joel’s prophecy occurred on the day of Pentecost in 33 CE (page 6, ¶15). The article also says that the increase in new publishers since 1919 is evidence that Jehovah also has poured out his spirit in our days.

But there is a great difference between the article from 1992 and the Attack-article from 2020. And this difference is the hallmark of the present GB: often the members do not accept types and antitypes even when the context clearly shows that this is the case—as here where Jehovah’s day is the setting. According to the GB, Joel’s prophecy about

the outpouring of the spirit was *finally* fulfilled at Pentecost in 33 CE, while the 1992 article takes the fulfillment in 33 CE as a type of a greater fulfillment from 1919 onward.

How do we know that the fulfillment in 33 CE is a type? Joel said (2:30, 31. NWT13):

³⁰ And I will give wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. ³¹ The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the coming of the great and awe-inspiring day of Jehovah.

The smaller fulfillment occurred in 70 CE. Jerusalem was on fire, and the smoke turned the sun into darkness and made the moon red at night. There was blood because many persons were killed. However, this situation must be a type of a bigger fulfillment because the day of Jehovah is mentioned, and this day refers to our future. This is also confirmed by the fact the destruction of Jerusalem is a type of the great tribulation (Matthew 24:21), and by Joel 3:2–18, where Jehovah’s final judgment is mentioned. This means that the context clearly shows that there must be a bigger fulfillment of Joel 2:28 in the time of the end. But the “Attack” article indicates that the GB does not accept this.

The conclusion is that the locusts refer to persons serving God in the time of the end before the great tribulation, and the outpouring of the spirit occurs in the same time period.

I will again refer to Romans 15:4 (NWT13).

For all the things that were written beforehand were written for our instruction, so that through our endurance and through the comfort from the Scriptures we might have hope.

These words show that the account of the locusts was included to teach us and give us hope. If the locusts refer to the Babylonian army, that does not give us any hope. But if they refer to the preaching work of God’s people in the time of the end, the description of the victories of God’s army certainly gives us hope. *The “Attack” article does not give us hope because the one who wrote the article did not take the context of Joel into account.*

The GB systematically removes the prophetic element from the accounts in the Hebrew Scriptures, also when the context shows that an account is a prophetic type.

THE BOOK, *PURE WORSHIP OF JEHOVAH — RESTORED AT LAST!*

Because the fulfillments of prophecies in most cases are not written in the Bible, there will always be a subjective element in the explanations of the prophecies. But there are some clues that may help the readers to check the explanations. For example, the clues of the 1,260, 1,290, 1,335, and 2,300 days and the 3 1/2 times mentioned in the book of Daniel are these: the time of the conclusion (end) (12:9); the people of God (12:7, 12); the disgusting thing causing desolation (12:11); and the holy place that will be restored to its right condition (8:14). Based on these clues, the readers can check the conclusions of the discussions of these time periods. Similar clues are connected with other prophecies.

The approach of the present GB to the texts of the Bible is very different from the approach used in the 19th and 20th centuries. The book *“The Nations Shall Know That I Am Jehovah”—How?* (1971) argues that the different accounts in the book of Ezekiel are prophetic, and they point to our time and to the future. These prophecies are linguistically analyzed, and the modern fulfillments are described in detail.

The book *Pure Worship of Jehovah—Restored At Last* (2019) claims to be “an updated explanation of Ezekiel’s prophecies.”⁸⁴ It argues that the book of Ezekiel includes a few prophetic texts that have their fulfillment today and in the future, but that a great part of the accounts of Ezekiel are not prophecies for our time or for the future; they refer only to ancient Israel. Therefore, these accounts have no particular meaning for persons in the 21st century. Thus, this “updated version” says in reality that a great part of the *Know Jehovah* book is bogus—the prophetic explanations are fiction. However, all these accounts that are not prophetic *remind* the GB and the author of the *Pure Worship* book of something. And the comments in the *Pure Worship* book dealing with these accounts are based on *these reminders*, a great number of which are allegorical.

84. The *Pure Worship* book, page 2.

This means that in connection with the mentioned accounts, the *Pure Worship* book does not in a great number of cases comment on *the meaning* of the text of Ezekiel—great parts of this text have no importance for us—but it comments on that which come up in the minds of the members of the GB when they read these texts. This is a highly subjective endeavor that the readers cannot check, and the focus is on the opinions of human beings, how they are regarding these texts. So these comments are *extra-biblical*; they represent a text *in addition* to the text of the Bible. Thus, the authority is moved from the Bible to humans, to the members of the GB.

Contrary to what the readers expect, a great part of the *Pure Worship* book does not contain analyses and comments on the text of Ezekiel. But it contains comments on what the text of Ezekiel *reminds* the GB of.

I have looked at all the occurrences in the *Pure Worship* book of the word “remind” where it refers to Ezekiel’s words and applies it to modern times. The following 19 examples show that the reminders are, in most cases, arbitrary.⁸⁵

THE REMINDERS THE AUTHOR OF THE PURE WORSHIP BOOK HAS FOUND

- 1) The description of the living creatures: “*reminds us of God’s name, Jehovah, which we understand to mean ‘He Causes to Become.’*” (43)
- 2) Ezekiel’s vision of Jehovah’s holiness and his surpassing might: “*reminds us that Jehovah is worthy of receiving our worship.*” (49)
- 3) Apostate Judah: “*reminds us of Christendom.*” (54)
- 4) Ezekiel’s prophecy about the end: “*reminds us that when the coming attack against religious organizations occurs, members of the churches will not be ‘going to battle’ to defend religion. Instead, as they begin to realize that their cry for help, ‘Lord, Lord,’ is going unanswered, ‘their hands will hang limp’ and they will be ‘shuddering.’*” (69)

85. The numbers at the end refer to the page numbers in the *Pure Worship* book. I have also looked at all the 26 “lessons” for our time. They are quite similar to the reminders, and I do not list them.

- 5) Ezekiel's statements regarding the fall of Jerusalem: "*remind us that the time still available for helping others to become God's servants is limited.*" (70)
- 6) The inspired description recorded at Ezekiel 34:15, 6: "*has often been used to remind Christian shepherds of the standard set by Jehovah God and Jesus Christ.*" (107)
- 7) The prophecy about the reviving of the dry bones: "*God who has the power to breathe life into dead bones can surely give us the strength we need to overcome obstacles—even those that, humanly speaking, are insurmountable. Read Psalm 18:29; Phil 4:13. We may be reminded that many centuries before Ezekiel's day, the prophet Moses stated that Jehovah has not only the power but also the desire to use his strength in behalf of his people.*" (120)
- 8) The perimeter wall: "*reminds us that we must never let anything corrupt our worship of Jehovah.*" (152)
- 9) The lofty outer gates and inner gates: "*remind us that Jehovah has high standards of conduct for all who would engage in pure worship.*" (152)
- 10) Anointed ones can find useful reminders in Ezekiel's vision of the temple: "*They note, for instance, that the priests were subject to counsel and discipline.*" (158)
- 11) The conditions in unfaithful Jerusalem: "*certainly remind us of what is happening in Christendom.*" (174)
- 12) Trees for food and healing: "*They thus remind us that we serve the God who generously feeds us and heals us in the most important way, spiritually.*" (207)
- 13) Marshy places that remained barren, abandoned to salt: "*We may be reminded . . . How foolish are those who stubbornly refuse to drink from the precious water of life!*" (209)
- 14) Lifting faithful humans to perfection: "*reminds us of those trees that Ezekiel saw along the riverbanks, trees that bear nourishing fruit and have leaves that heal.*" (210)
- 15) Jews returning from Babylon to Jerusalem: "*remind us of a similar development that has been taking place among God's people in modern times.*" (213)

- 16) Considering details about the land and the inhabitants in the temple vision: “*We are reminded that equality and unity need to be outstanding features of our worldwide brotherhood today.*” (217)
- 17) The city in the temple vision stands on common, or nonsacred, land: “*It reminds us that the city refers, not to a heavenly, but to an earthly administration, which has been functioning for the benefit of all who inhabit the spiritual paradise.*” (221)
- 18) The workers near the city come from among *all* the tribes of Israel: “*Does this arrangement remind us of an opportunity that we have today? Yes. Today **all** inhabitants of the spiritual paradise have the opportunity to support the service of Christ’s anointed brothers and the service of those among the ‘great crowd’ whom Jehovah has appointed to take the lead.*” (222)
- 19) The prophetic descriptions of Israel and Judah as being like prostitutes: “*remind us of just how repugnant spiritual adultery is to Jehovah.*” (228)

I have some comments on the most glaring examples:

There is no direct relationship between the living creatures and God’s name and its supposed meaning (1)⁸⁶ and between Ezekiel’s prophecy about the end and that the hands of the members of the churches “will hang limp,” and that they “will be shuddering” (4). There is no relationship between Ezekiel’s statements regarding the fall of Jerusalem, and that the time for helping others today is limited (5). There is no relationship between the perimeter wall in the temple vision and that we never let anything corrupt our worship of Jehovah (8), or between the outer and inner gates and the high standards of worship that Jehovah requires (9).

Points 10 to 19 are connected with the temple vision, and the reminders are close to the antitypical application of this vision. But still, the relationship between the reminder and the text of Ezekiel is not clear. Even examples that seem to be logical can be questioned. Point 3 says that apostate Judah reminds us of Christendom, and the *Pure Worship* book, page 174, says:

Is there a solid Scriptural basis for referring to Christendom as the antitypical Jerusalem? No.

86. Later in this chapter, I will show that the meaning “He Causes to Become” for God’s name has no linguistic basis.

Consider the following: Jerusalem was at one time a center of pure worship; later, its inhabitants turned apostate. By contrast, Christendom has *never* practiced pure worship. Right from the inception in the fourth century C.E., Christendom has *always* taught false doctrine.

In addition, after Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians, Jehovah restored the city to his favor and it again became the center of true worship. Christendom, on the other hand, has never had God's favor, and once it is destroyed during the great tribulation, it will never rise again.

The authors of the *Know Jehovah* book were aware of the data in the quotation. But their point was that it was *apostate Jerusalem in the days of Ezekiel* that was the type of Christendom; what Jerusalem was before and after this was irrelevant. Below I will show that there is **a solid Scriptural basis** for viewing apostate Jerusalem as *a type* of Christendom. But if there is such a great difference between Jerusalem and Christendom, as the quotation shows, how *can* apostate Jerusalem in the book of Ezekiel *remind* the GB and the author of the *Pure Worship* book of Christendom? If there are so great differences that a type-antitype is excluded, ancient Jerusalem would not naturally remind anyone of Christendom. This is one of the many strange reasonings I have found in the book.

Excursus on Bible Interpretation

The Bible Students and Jehovah's Witnesses studied the Bible to find patterns that they could use for the interpretation of its text. Under God's direction, the writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures interpreted the prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures. Some prophecies had one fulfillment, and others had one fulfillment in the 1st century CE and would have another fulfillment in the time of the conclusion and/or in the new system of things. They also learned that many accounts in the Hebrew Scriptures represented types foreshadowing greater things. And most important, they developed a deep respect for God's Word. As Jesus said: "Your word is truth" and "yet the scripture cannot be nullified." (John 17:17 and 10:35, NWT13) A study of how the Christian Greek Scriptures treats the texts of the Hebrew Scriptures shows that these texts of the Hebrew Scriptures do not get an allegoric but a literal fulfillment.

Prophecies and prophetic types have literal fulfillments

The basic principle that they learned from the writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures was that both the fulfillments of prophecies and the nature of the prophetic antitypes were concrete and literal and never metaphorical or allegorical. Books and articles that were published in the 19th and 20th centuries by the Watchtower Society consistently followed the literal application of prophecies and prophetic types.

The members of the present GB have followed a different course. Instead of giving a detailed explanation of the nuances of the text of the Bible based on linguistic analysis, they explain this text as *reminders* and *lessons*, and they often use allegorical interpretations.

The word “lesson” is a neutral word indicating something that we are taught or something that we have learned. But it seems to me that the present GB uses this word in a technical sense. *The Watchtower* literature in the 20th century often gave a detailed analysis of one or more verses in the Bible. The members of the present GB believe that the details of the text of the Hebrew Scriptures are not important and that many texts are just “filling material.” What matters is the broad picture, and my impression is that “*lesson*” is used in the technical sense of “the broad picture.”⁸⁷ This means that “*lesson*” is the opposite of a detailed analysis of one or more verses in the Bible. I prefer to show what one or more scriptures tell me about Jehovah and his purpose instead of using the word “*lesson*.”

It is difficult for me to understand the logic behind the new principle of the GB: “**This scripture reminds me/us of . . .**” First, there is no passage in the Bible indicating that the writers denied that a text had an intrinsic meaning, but that its purpose was to remind the readers of something. The word *hupomimnēskō* (“remind”) occurs seven times in the Christian Greek Scriptures, and *mnemoneuō* (“remember; mention”) occurs 21 times. None of these passages are used in the way the *Pure Worship* book uses the word “remind.”⁸⁸

87. See “Lessons We Can Learn From the Book of Leviticus,” in *The Watchtower* of November 2019, pages 20–25. The lessons mentioned do not include a detailed analysis of the text of the Bible. But they draw general conclusions from this text.

88. Jude (verse 5) reminds (*hupomimnēskō*) his readers that persons who were delivered from Egypt were later destroyed. But the situation also represents a prophetic type (1 Corinthians 10:1, 2). Jesus said, “Remember (*mnemoneuō*) the wife of Lot.” (Luke 17:32) But he also shows that this situation represents a prophetic type. Both examples represent a warning, but they do not represent a new explanation principle of the text of the Bible.

Second, by following this principle, the authority of a passage is moved from the Holy Scriptures to human beings. This is so because it is the human being who must tell what the text *reminds him* of.

Third, the situation is fluid because the same passage *can remind* different persons of different things; and there are no constraints.

The opposite approach is shown by Jesus when he said: “It is written.” (Luke 4:8) And he referred to a text with a clear meaning, a text that could be analyzed linguistically in its context. This was the principle that JW consistently used in the 20th century. It is an objective approach because the readers can check the conclusions that are presented.

Examples of literal fulfillments

I will now present some passages showing that the writers of the Christian Greek Scriptures never used allegorical interpretations and never used the principle, “*this reminds me of . . .*” The writers always made clear and concrete interpretations.

Some prophetic types: The following persons are listed as types of Jesus: David (Revelation 5:5), Solomon (Luke 11:31), Moses (Acts 3:20–22), Jonah (Matthew 12:39, 40), Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:1–3), Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45). One or more sides of each person pointed to Jesus in a literal way.

There are also types of wicked persons in the Hebrew Scriptures. Jude 1:7, 8 shows that the people in Sodom and Gomorrah were types of wicked persons who had infiltrated the Christian congregations and of the punishment of these persons. The Greek word *deigma* (“example, warning”) is translated as “warning example” by NWT13. Jesus shows in Luke 17:29–32 that the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah was a type of the judgment in the great tribulation.

Jude verses 3, 4, 11, 12 shows that Cain, Balaam, and Korah are types pointing to the wicked persons that had slipped into the congregations. That these persons were real types is seen by the words in verse 4 (NWT13), “who were long ago appointed to this judgment by the Scriptures.”

Some prophecies: Genesis 22:17, 18 is quoted in Galatians 3:16. The Hebrew substantive *zera'* (“seed”) has the same form in singular and plural. However, the pronoun “his” is attached to “enemies,” indicating that the seed is singular. According to Paul, this seed is Christ. The passage

also shows that Abraham would have numerous descendants, and these are the anointed Christians who belong to Christ. (Galatians 3:27–29)

Jeremiah 31:31–34 speaks about the new covenant with Israel and Judah. Hebrews 8:8–12 points to a literal fulfillment on the anointed Christians.

Hosea 2:23 says that persons who were not God’s people will be called “his people.” Paul applies this prophecy to the Jews and people of the nations that had become Christians. (Romans 9:24–26)

Micah 5:1 refers to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. (Matthew 2:6)

The prophecies above had a literal fulfillment, and the same is true with all other prophecies that are mentioned in the Christian Greek Scriptures. There are no allegorical fulfillments or reminders.

Conclusion

There is no pattern in the Bible suggesting that prophetic and non-prophetic accounts in the Hebrew Scriptures should be interpreted in a subjective or allegorical way. The examples above show that literal interpretations and literal fulfillments are the pattern.

The temple vision of Ezekiel is found in chapters 40–48. The most important reason why I reject the subjective and allegorical interpretation of this vision and other texts in the *Pure Worship* book is the pattern of the tabernacle. Regardless of whether Ezekiel’s temple refers to the same reality as the tabernacle or to something else, the pattern of interpretation is found in Hebrews chapters 8–10. This pattern is literal! This means that the new kind of interpretation invented by the GB, which is claimed to have “**the hallmark of divine teaching**,” has no basis in the Holy Scriptures whatsoever.

The same is true with “**this text reminds us of . . .**”-method instead of viewing the text as prophetic. True, God’s servants in the past served as examples for us. Sarah was an example for Christian women (1 Peter 3:1–6), Abraham and Rahab were examples because of their faith (James 2:20–26), and Job and the prophets were examples of showing patience when they suffered evil. (James 5:10, 11) But there are good reasons to believe that these persons were also prophetic types that foreshadowed bigger things. So, when we take them as examples, that does not nullify their function as prophetic types.

When we make a detailed comparison between the “updated version” of Ezekiel of 2019 and the *Know Jehovah* book of 1971, we may be able to see the enormous differences between the view of the Bible of the members of the GB in 1972 and the members in 2019. I use the expression, “may be able to” because the updated version, the *Pure Worship* book, is intentionally or unintentionally written in a covert way, so the real basis for a great number of comments in the updated edition is not easy to discern. True, the book has a list of the differences in viewpoints between the two books (pages 238–240). But the real nature of these differences is in many cases hidden. I use the following example:

Previous understanding: Unfaithful Jerusalem is a prophetic type of Christendom. Hence, the destruction of Jerusalem prophetically foreshadowed that of Christendom.

Clarification: Conditions in unfaithful Jerusalem—such as idolatry and widespread corruption—*remind us* of Christendom, but we no longer refer to Christendom as the **antitypical Jerusalem**.⁸⁹ (My italics.)

The key expression here is “**remind us**,” and it is very important to understand the meaning of this key expression. To illustrate the meaning, I will use the words of the GB. The righteous man Naboth was killed by Ahab and Jezebel. As I have shown above, the book *Let Your Name Be Sanctified* takes the account of Naboth, who was killed by Jezebel and Ahab, as a prophetic type. This is denied by the present GB, and *The Watchtower* of June 15, 2015, page 7, says:

For example, we can rightly say that Naboth’s integrity in the face of persecution and death *reminds us* of the integrity of Christ and his anointed. However, we can also *be reminded* of the faithful stand of many of the Lord’s “other sheep.” **Such a clear and simple comparison has the hallmark of divine teaching**.⁹⁰ (My italics.)

The *Know Jehovah* book (page 324) takes the account of Naboth as a prophetic type of the anointed Christians. This means that the explanation has a clear constraint. The account can only be applied to one concrete situation. The view of the members of the present GB is that the account is not a prophetic type, and it does not refer to any particular situation in our day. The reason why the account is included in the Bible is that

89. The *Pure Worship* book, page 239.

90. *The Watchtower* of June 15, 2015, page 8.

Jehovah wants to remind us of . . .—, and here, there is no constraint. So, what the GB is reminded of by a particular account cannot be checked. What the quotation shows is more like an association-game than with a serious explanation of a text in the Bible. This is seen in the 19 reminders on pages 375-377. I can absolutely not see “**the hallmark of divine teaching**” in this approach. I will illustrate this with some more examples.

The *Know Jehovah* book applies Ezekiel’s words to concrete situations in our time. The application of the *Pure Worship* book of the same words is an association-game that can be applied to a number of things. And there are no constraints by which one can check the applications. The comments in a great part of the *Pure Worship* book are not comments on the text of Ezekiel. They are just subjective reminders!

Several times the *Pure Worship* book says that only when there is “**a clear Scriptural basis**,” the authors will view an account as a type with an antitypical fulfillment. Unfortunately, in several situations, they are violating this principle. Moreover, the comments are often written in a hidden or covert way, so it is difficult for the readers to see the principles behind the interpretations.

THE PURE WORSHIP BOOK TREATS EZEKIEL AS A PROPHETIC TYPE WITHOUT ADMITTING IT

The discussion that follows illuminates one side that may be hidden for the readers. The siege of Jerusalem started in 609, and Ezekiel became “mute,” which means that he would not prophesy regarding Jerusalem. (24:1, 2; 3:26, 27) Because Ezekiel was in Babylon, he had no contact with the inhabitants of Jerusalem. However, one who had escaped the destruction came to Ezekiel in Babylon and told him about the destruction of Jerusalem. At that point, Ezekiel was no longer mute. (24:25–27; 33:21, 22) We note that 24:27 (NWT84) says that Ezekiel was a portent (*mōfeṭ*) for the people. BDB defines *mōfeṭ* as “1. wonder, as special display of God’s power. 2. Sign or token of future event; symbolic act.” KM also lists the word “portent.”

For whom was Ezekiel “a portent”? Both for the Jewish exiles in Babylon and for the house of Israel, who lived in Jerusalem and Judah (4:3;

12:6, 11).⁹¹ Those who lived in Jerusalem and Judah did not know about the actions of Ezekiel that represented portents; the book of Ezekiel was written after the destruction of Jerusalem. Therefore, Ezekiel must be a portent (a prophetic type) that referred to antitypes at the time when the restoration prophecies were fulfilled. (See point 8, page 347) But this is denied by the present GB.

Corroborating the view that Ezekiel was a prophetic type of greater things is the fact that the prophet Isaiah was a “portent” as well. In Isaiah 8:18, (NWT84) we read:

Look! I and the children whom Jehovah has given me are as signs (*mōfeṭ*) and as miracles in Israel from Jehovah of armies, who is residing in Mount Zion.

The words above are quoted in Hebrews 2:13, and they show that the sons were prophetic types that foreshadowed the spiritual sons of God who were brothers of Jesus. The use of the word “portent” in Isaiah suggests that the same word in Ezekiel 12:6, 11, and 24:27 shows that Ezekiel was a prophetic type as well. The *‘Know Jehovah’* book says (pages 277–278):

³³ Is this not something thrilling for us to contemplate, namely, the fulfillment of this prophetic drama within our generation? It will be definitely indicated when the “great tribulation,” like the siege against Jerusalem, begins upon her modern-time counterpart, Christendom. (Ezekiel 24:1–5) After that, the anointed Ezekiel class of today need say no more. What they will have already said concerning the outcome of that “great tribulation” will be enough.⁹²

The *Pure Worship* book discusses Ezekiel’s prophetic actions about the destruction of Jerusalem in chapter 5. Regarding the great tribulation the book says on page 66:

¹⁰ . . . At Armageddon, they [members of false religions] will be put to death, together with all other goatlike ones. . . .

¹¹ . . . As far as sharing the *good* news is concerned, we will become “mute,” just as Ezekiel became mute, or stopped proclaiming his messages, during part of his ministry. (Ezek. 3:26, 27; 33:21, 22)

91. The Hebrew word translated by “sign” in 4:3 is *’ōṭ*. It has a wide semantic field, including “signs, omens promised by prophets as pledges of certain predicted events.” (BDB)

92. See also *The Watchtower* of September 15, 1988, page 21; and December 1, 2003, page 29.

As I already have pointed out, the book is written in a covert way. Most readers will not understand that the author of the book does not take Ezekiel and what he did as prophecies or prophetic types. But the comments in the book are based on what Ezekiel's descriptions *remind* the GB of. This, for the most part, is hidden because *the reminders* often are close to the prophetic antitypes that are written in the *Know Jehovah* book.

Because the GB does not view Ezekiel as a prophetic type, the comments about his muteness must also be what this situation *reminds* the author of. But there is one problem, namely, that there is no place in the Hebrew Scriptures or the Christian Greek Scriptures where it is explicitly said that the good news would no longer be proclaimed when the great tribulation starts. The reason for this view by JW is that Ezekiel's muteness is viewed as a prophetic type. Therefore, when the muteness is mentioned, this cannot only be what the author *is reminded* of. But even though the author will not admit it, the *Pure Worship* book treats Ezekiel here as a prophetic type, and his muteness *foreshadows* the muteness of JW when the great tribulation starts.

EZEKIEL AS A WATCHMAN

Another example of the GB's rejection of prophetic types, but where this is hidden in the text, is the account of Ezekiel as a watchman. Ezekiel 33:7 (NWT13) says: "As for you, son of man, I have appointed you as a watchman to the house of Israel." The *Know Jehovah* book has a detailed discussion about the watchman in chapter 15, and applies the dramatic details to the anointed remnant in the time of the end—Ezekiel is the type, and the remnant of the anointed ones is the antitype.⁹³ Chapter 11 in the *Pure Worship* book discusses Ezekiel's role as a watchman. The book says:

² Today, Jehovah's executorial forces are marching toward a confrontation with the faithless inhabitants of the earth. (Rev. 17:12–14) That clash will be the culmination of the greatest tribulation in human history. (Matt. 24:21) But it is not too late for many to respond to the warning sounded by those whom Jehovah has appointed to do the work of a watchman.⁹⁴

Do these words show that the present GB believes that Ezekiel was a type of a modern watchman? I think that most readers will understand the

93. The *Know Jehovah* book, page 286.

94. The *Pure Worship* book, pages 121–122.

words in this way. Particularly so, because pages 124, 127, 128, list two modern “exemplary watchmen,” namely, C. T. Russell and the faithful slave. But the answer is No; Ezekiel is not a *type* of a modern watchman, according to the GB. But Ezekiel as watchman *reminds* the GB of C. T. Russell and the faithful slave.

In order to illustrate the nature of the association-game, I will use an example. I might say: “The role of Ezekiel as a watchman *reminds* me of my friend George who is a watchman at the Svartisen Glacier. Recently a group of JW visited the glacier, and George warned them that if they walked beyond the signs, pieces of ice may hit them and kill them.” Am I correct when I take Ezekiel’s work as a watchman *as a reminder* of my friend George? Absolutely! Both were watchmen, both warned humans, and both saved lives. The problem is that there is absolutely no relationship between George and Ezekiel. But the same is true with C. T. Russell and the faithful slave, according to the GB. However, most readers of chapter 11 in the *Pure Worship* book will draw the conclusion that there is a clear prophetic relationship between Ezekiel and C. T. Russell and the faithful slave. This is what I mean when I say that parts of the book are “written in a hidden or a covert way.”

The comments in the *Pure Worship* book about Ezekiel as a watchman are written in a covert way. The readers will get the impression that Ezekiel is a type with modern antitypes, which is not correct according to the GB. The other watchmen only represent what Jehovah’s words to Ezekiel *reminds* the GB of.

The present GB has on many occasions, directly and indirectly, criticized the previous leaders of JW, both regarding their decisions and their Bible understanding. And the present GB, evidently, has a strong aversion to types and antitypes. However, as I already have shown, Ezekiel was a sign or portent both for the exiles in Babylon (24:27) and for the house of Israel, who lived in Jerusalem and Judah (4:3; 12:6, 11). Those who lived in Jerusalem and Judah did not know about the actions of Ezekiel that represented portents; the book of Ezekiel was written after the destruction of Jerusalem. Therefore, Ezekiel must be a portent (a prophetic type) that refers to an antitype at the time when the restoration prophecies is or will be fulfilled. Thus, there is *a clear Scriptural basis* confirming the *Know Jehovah* book’s application of Ezekiel’s function as a

watchman as a prophetic type, against the allegorical application of the *Pure Worship* book.⁹⁵

I will now apply the principle of ***a clear Scriptural basis*** to three different accounts: the vision of the dry bones, the marks on the foreheads, and the destruction of Jerusalem.

THE VISION ABOUT THE DRY BONES AS A PROPHETIC TYPE

I will first look at one account in the light of the GB's requirement for a type-antitype function. We read:

In the past, we have viewed a number of elements in Ezekiel's prophecies as a basis for the type-antitype fulfillment. This publication, however, refrains from describing any person, object, place, or event as a prophetic type that has a modern antitype unless there is ***a clear basis in Scripture*** for doing so.⁹⁶ (My bold script and italics.)

What does this mean? I will consider the vision about the dry bones that came to life. (Ezekiel 37:1–14) To whom does this vision refer? Verse 11 says that “these bones are the whole house of Israel,” and there is nothing in the verses showing that the vision will have a greater fulfillment. Regarding this vision, the *Pure Worship* book says:

⁹ Restoration prophecies concerning Israel, such as the ones spoken by Ezekiel, have a larger fulfillment. (Acts 3:21)⁹⁷

¹⁴ How did this part of Ezekiel's prophecy see a larger fulfillment? As Jehovah revealed to Ezekiel in a related prophecy, the principal fulfillment of this restoration prophecy would occur some time after the Greater David, Jesus Christ, began to rule as king. (Ezek. 37:24) And indeed, in 1919, Jehovah put his spirit in his people.⁹⁸

This explanation supports my points above that “***a clear basis in Scripture***” does not require that the text itself or the near context says that this is a type or a prophecy with two fulfillments. If there are clues in other

95. On pages 343–347 of this book, the criteria for “A clear Scriptural basis for prophecies and prophetic types” are listed. Two of these fit Ezekiel's function as a watchman: number 8). Texts that are written down after their initial fulfillments must represent prophetic types, and number 9). Persons and events that are said to be signs or portents.

96. *Pure Worship*, Box 2A, page 25.

97. *Ibid.*, page 114.

98. *Ibid.*, page 117.

books of the Bible, that will suffice. (See point 3, pages 343, 344) And here the clue is Acts 3:21. There are a great number of accounts of restoration in the books of the Hebrew Scriptures. By applying this scripture to Ezekiel 37:1–14, the GB indirectly admits that all these accounts are prophetic types, also when the near context of each account does not explicitly say so. This also confirms that Ezekiel’s role as watchman foreshadows a greater fulfillment.

The application of Acts 3:21 as “*a clear Scriptural basis*” for the type-antitype nature of the vision of the dry bones, shows something important that the GB is reluctant to admit: There are types and antitypes in the book of Ezekiel because in the prophecy of the dry bones “the whole house of Israel” must be a type and the anointed Christians in modern times are the antitype.

THE VISION ABOUT THE MARKS ON THE FOREHEADS

In his vision, Ezekiel saw a man clothed in linen with a secretary’s inkhorn at his waist. Jehovah said to the man (9:4, NWT13):

Go through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who are sighing and groaning over all the detestable things that are being done in the city.

When this work was completed, six men, each with a weapon of destruction in his hand, would go through the city and strike down all the persons who did not have the mark on their foreheads. (9:1, 2, 5–10) The *Know Jehovah* book views the man clothed in linen as a type of the anointed remnant, who, during Christ’s presence, by their preaching, put a mark on the foreheads of sincere persons.

The *Pure Worship* book views the whole account as a prophetic type with two fulfillments. The book says regarding the two fulfillments (pages 175, 176, 179):

⁹ . . . Ezekiel’s prophecy was fulfilled in 607 B.C.E. when the Babylonian army destroyed Jerusalem and its temple.

²⁴ How, though, is Ezekiel’s prophetic vision fulfilled in our day? . . .

[Box 16B] **WHEN:** During the great tribulation. **HOW:** The man with the secretary’s inkhorn represents Jesus Christ when he comes as Judge of all the nations. Those of the great crowd will be favorably judged, or marked, as sheep, thus indicating that they will survive Armageddon.

Let us now apply the requirement of “*a clear Scriptural basis*” for viewing something as a prophetic type. The words about the marking on the foreheads are a continuation of the account in chapter 8. Ezekiel got a vision of all the detestable things that occurred in Jerusalem and in the temple. Jehovah told Ezekiel that he would “act in rage” and not “feel compassion,” and the idolaters would be destroyed (8:18). Ezekiel got a new vision that is described in chapter 9. Persons who were sighing and groaning over all the detestable things mentioned in chapter 8 will be marked on the forehead and will survive when Jerusalem is destroyed.

Is there anything in the context indicating that the actions in 9:1–11 about the marks on the foreheads are prophetic types that will have their fulfillment in the great tribulation? The answer is No. So why does the GB and the author of the book treat the verses as prophetic types? The book does not tell us. But the only logical answer is my point 4 “Accounts with special or peculiar content” on pages 339, 340 and point 8 “Texts that are written after their initial fulfillments must represent prophetic types” on page 348. Ezekiel received his visions while he was in Babylon, and the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem did not know about the visions, which were written in a scroll after the destruction of Jerusalem. Because of this background, and because the drama of chapter 9 is special, the only natural conclusion why it is included in the Bible is that the chapter represents prophetic types of bigger things. But should we not draw the same conclusion regarding chapters 4 to 8, that these chapters also contain prophetic types? When the man with the inkhorn and the six men with weapons of destruction are prophetic types of what happens in “Jerusalem,” then Jerusalem must also be a prophetic type. This is obvious, but the members of the GB do not accept that. Let us look more closely into this issue.

VIEWING JERUSALEM AS A TYPE OF CHRISTENDOM HAS A CLEAR SCRIPTURAL BASIS

Why is unfaithful Jerusalem not used as a prophetic type when chapter 9, which is a continuation of chapters 4–8, is taken as a prophetic type? The *Pure Worship* book says on page 174:

Jerusalem was at one time a center of pure worship; later, its inhabitants turned apostate. By contrast, Christendom has never practiced pure worship.

Right from its inception in the fourth century C.E., Christendom has always taught false doctrine.

In addition, after Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians, Jehovah restored the city to his favor and it again became the center of true worship. Christendom, on the other hand, has never had God's favor, and once it is destroyed during the great tribulation, it will never rise again.

In view of the foregoing, what may we conclude? When we examine Bible prophecies that were fulfilled on unfaithful Jerusalem, we may say, '*This or that reminds us of what we see in Christendom today.*' But there appears to be no Scriptural basis for referring to Christendom as the antitypical Jerusalem. (My italics.)

Let us look at the arguments in the quotation above in the light of *The Watchtower* of March 15, 2015, page 18:

However, even where the Bible indicates that someone is a type of someone else, we should not conclude that every detail or incident in the life of the type is a picture of something greater. For example, although Paul tells us that Melchizedek is a type of Jesus, Paul says nothing about the fact that on one occasion Melchizedek brought out bread and wine for Abraham to enjoy after he had defeated four kings.

The words of the last quotation are, of course, true. And they show that the arguments in the next to the last quotation are untenable. Melchizedek was a type of Jesus in some respects but not in others, and similarly, what Jerusalem was in the past and what the city would be in the future is irrelevant. The focus of Ezekiel is on unfaithful Jerusalem in the years before she was destroyed in 607 BCE. There are good reasons to believe that unfaithful Jerusalem was a prophetic type in this time period!

In chapters 4 and 5, Ezekiel performs different actions showing that Jerusalem will be destroyed. Chapter 6 tells that false worship will be removed from the land, and chapter 7 tells that the end is near. Chapter 8 tells about a vision where Ezekiel sees that false worship occurs in the temple in Jerusalem. The focus of all these chapters is the city of Jerusalem that has turned against Jehovah. Chapter 9 is a continuation of chapters 4–8, and the actions of the man with the secretary's inkhorn and the six men with weapons of destruction *happen in Jerusalem*. Therefore, it is really strange and inconsistent when the *Pure Worship* book takes the events in chapter 9 as prophetic types, but all the events in connection with Jerusalem described in chapters 4–8 have no prophetic meaning at all—they only *remind us* of different things.

Let us now return to Acts 3:21 and the expression “restoration of all things.” The Greek word is *apokatastasis*, and according to Louw and Nida the word means: “to change to a previous good state—to restore, to cause again to be, restoration.” What is necessary to change the earth to its “previous good state”? First of all, the wicked enemies of God must be removed, and second, the earth must be made into a paradise. This means that if we argue that Acts 3:21 shows that the vision of the dry bones contains prophetic types for our time, then, in order to be consistent, we must argue that the unfaithful actions of Jerusalem and its destruction contain prophetic types for our time as well. This is so because removing the wicked is the first part of the restoration of all things.

Let us also look at the time element. Ezekiel was in Babylon, and he was writing in the year 613, which was four years before the siege of Jerusalem started and six years before its destruction. Ezekiel performed different actions to show what would happen. These actions were seen by Jews who were exiled in Babylon. But they were not seen by the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. Ezekiel had different visions, and he may have told some Jews in Babylon about his visions. But the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah did not know about them. This means that the detailed contents of chapters 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, were not known by those who were the focus of Ezekiel’s prophetic actions, the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

We must keep in mind that while Ezekiel evidently wrote down his visions shortly after he received them, the book of Ezekiel was written down in 591 or later; this is 16 or more years *after* the destruction of Jerusalem.⁹⁹ This fact alone indicates that the contents of the mentioned chapters represent prophetic types of bigger things, just as the *Know Jehovah* book says. It does not make sense to write down visions and prophecies that occurred and were fulfilled before they were written down—without a bigger fulfillment. (See point 8, page 347) Also, the mentioned chapters contain a great number of details. If all this text shall “teach us” and give us “hope” (Romans 15:4), the details must have a concrete meaning for us

99. In the 12th year of the exile, Ezekiel was informed that Jerusalem had been struck down (Ezekiel 33:21). He could only have written this down after the destruction of Jerusalem. The prophet received one vision in 593, in the 25th year of the exile (40:1), and another vision in 591, in the 27th year of the exile (29:17). So the whole book must have been written down after the last vision.

“upon whom the ends of the systems of things have arrived.”
(1 Corinthians 10:11)

The *Know Jehovah* book explains the details of chapters 4–9 in their dramatic settings, and we get a strong impression of Jehovah’s righteousness and power. The *Pure Worship* book applies some of the details in a trivial way and adds many comments that have nothing to do with the text of Ezekiel. I give some examples:

The Idolatrous Symbol of Jealousy (8:5, 6, pages 53–54):

Apostate Judah certainly reminds us of Christendom. Idolatry is widespread in the churches of Christendom, which makes invalid any devotion that the people claim to give God.

The reader may get the impression that apostate Judah is a type of Christendom, as the *Know Jehovah* book says. But that is not the case.

Seventy Elders Offering Incense to False Gods (8:7–12, pages 54–58):

What can we learn from Ezekiel’s account of those 70 Israelite elders who offered incense to false gods? For our prayers to be heard by God—and to keep our worship pure in his eyes—we must remain faithful even “in the darkness.” (Prov. 15:29)

Women . . . Weeping Over the god Tammuz (8:13, 14, page 58):

What lesson can we learn from Jehovah’s view of what these women were doing? To keep our worship pure, never mix it with unclean pagan practices.

Men “Bowing Down to the Sun” (8:15–18, pages 58–59):

What can we learn from the account of those sun worshippers? To keep our worship pure, we must look to Jehovah for spiritual enlightenment.

These explanations show that according to the view of the GB the 18 verses in chapter 8 have no meaning for us—they have no fulfillment in our time. But based on the subjective view of the GB the verses can teach us something.

According to chapter 5, Ezekiel performed symbolic actions indicating that Jerusalem would be destroyed. The *Pure Worship* book asks (page 64, subheading): “What Does This Prophecy Tell Us About Coming Events?” The answer is:

The events Ezekiel acted out *bring to mind* the significant events that God’s Word foretells for our future.

The reader may again get the impression that Ezekiel's actions represent types of bigger events that will happen in our future. But that is not the case; the details of chapters 4 to 8 have no meaning for our time, according to the GB. The book discusses future events that have nothing to do with Ezekiel, and then the question is posed (page 66):

How does our understanding of this prophecy affect our view of the ministry and its urgency? It impresses on us that we need to do our utmost today to help people to become servants of Jehovah.

The word "understanding" in connection with "this prophecy" is strange. Only if chapter 5 includes prophetic types showing that God's enemies will be destroyed in the future, can the prophecy indicate the urgency of the ministry. There are no prophetic types, according to the GB. But the *Pure Worship* book uses words as if there were types. The conclusion of the chapter is as follows (page 70):

In summary: what are some of the ways Ezekiel's prophetic statements about the fall of Jerusalem affect us today? They remind us that the time still available for helping others to become God's servants is limited.

I must again point out that the reasoning of the book is strange. Nothing in chapters 4–8 is indicating the urgency of the ministry. And nothing is indicating that the time for the ministry is limited. These ideas are connected with the great prophecy of Jesus and the appointed times of the nations. But they are not found in chapters 4–8 in Ezekiel's prophecy. This shows that the GB's subjective and allegorical system of interpretation has no constraints. Anything that comes to their mind can be a reminder.

Ezekiel was borne along by holy spirit when he wrote his book, including chapters 4–8. Why were these chapters included in the Holy Scriptures? Are the details of chapter 8 unimportant? By reading the chapter, we should, according to the GB, learn that we have to keep our worship clean and seek Jehovah's enlightenment. And are the details of chapter 4 unimportant? By reading the chapter, we should learn that the ministry is urgent and that the time for the preaching is short. It is not possible to learn something from the chapters that is not found in the chapters. So, most of the comments that the author of the book has connected with chapters 4–8 are ideas in the minds of the members of the GB, ideas that are unrelated to the chapters.

In contrast, the approach of the *Know Jehovah* book is based on the patterns of Bible interpretation that are found in the Bible itself. The original text of Ezekiel was analyzed, and the details of the text both in its fulfillment on Jerusalem and its bigger fulfillment on Christendom are explained. Based on this approach, we can understand why the book of Ezekiel was included in the Holy Scriptures. But if the text only referred to ancient Jerusalem, and those who are mentioned in chapters 4–8 did not know about the existence of this text because it was written down after the events were fulfilled, then I cannot see any logical purpose for including chapters 4–8 in the Bible.

Unfaithful Jerusalem must be a prophetic type of Christendom because:

Chapter 9 contains prophetic types, and chapters 4–8, which are a part of the same unit, must accordingly contain prophetic types.

The destruction of Jerusalem is a part of the restoration prophecies (Acts 3:21), which contain prophetic expressions and prophetic types.

The accounts of the unfaithfulness and destruction of Jerusalem include many details. All details are included with a purpose. When the inhabitants of Jerusalem did not know about these details, they must be prophetic types.

Only if the destruction of Jerusalem foreshadows the destruction that is the first part of the restoration, will it give us hope.

MORE PROPHECIES WITH ALLEGORICAL EXPLANATIONS

The explanations of the temple vision in the *Pure Worship* book illustrate the true nature of the GB's new view of the Bible. The *Know Jehovah* book, like all the other books and magazines in the 20th century, takes an objective approach: What is the meaning of the inspired text in the book of Ezekiel? To what does this text refer? The *Pure Worship* book, in contrast, has a subjective and allegorical approach: How do the different

accounts *remind us* of spiritual values? Which *lessons* can we learn from the chapters in the book of Ezekiel?

The GB and the author of the *Pure Worship* book refuse to accept the view of the Bible Students and JW during the last 120 years that Ezekiel's temple is identical to Jehovah's spiritual temple, and that the vision includes prophetic types that have antitypes.¹⁰⁰ One reason for the rejection is that "the temple Ezekiel saw does not fit Paul's inspired explanation" of the tabernacle.¹⁰¹ This is a weak argument because the same features and events are often described from different angles. The spiritual temple explained by Paul shows the way to heaven for spirit-begotten persons, from their situation on earth in the Holy compartment, through the curtain, which symbolizes the body of Jesus, and into the Most Holy, which symbolizes heaven. However, the focus of Ezekiel's temple vision, as it is explained by the *Know Jehovah* book, is the application of the ransom sacrifice of Jesus to persons who will survive Armageddon or be resurrected in the Thousand Year Reign of Jesus. This may explain the differences between the features of the tabernacle and Ezekiel's temple.

Regarding the temple vision, the *Pure Worship* book says:

[It] *focuses our attention on* the spiritual restoration that began in 1919.

Most decidedly, then, Ezekiel's vision does apply to pure worship today. Much as it benefitted the Jewish exiles in ancient times, this vision benefits us today in two ways. 1) It provides *practical lessons* about how we can uphold Jehovah's standards for pure worship. 2) It gives prophetic reassurances of the restoration of pure worship and of Jehovah's blessings.¹⁰²

These words indicate that Ezekiel's temple vision does not include types that have modern antitypes. But it "*focuses our attention on. . .*," and it "*provides practical lessons. . .*," according to the GB. This indicates allegorical interpretations that we clearly see in the examples from page 243 that I have referred to before:

The perimeter wall (2), which enclosed the temple complex in the center of a wide area (3), reminds us that we must never let anything corrupt our worship of Jehovah.

100. The *Pure Worship* book, page 138. *The Watchtower* of 1 August 2007 explains Ezekiel's temple view as prophetic types.

101. *Pure Worship*, page 139.

102. *Ibid.*, pages 141, 154.

The lofty outer gates (5) and inner gates (9) remind us that Jehovah has high standards of conduct for all who would engage in pure worship.

There is absolutely no connection between non-corrupt worship and the perimeter wall and high standards of conduct in connection with worship and high gates. This reminds me more of the allegorical interpretations of Augustin of Hippo in connection with types and antitypes (see *The Watchtower* of March 15, 2015, page 18) than a balanced exposition of the Bible.

Below I will give some examples of an objective explanation of the text of the Bible from the *Know Jehovah* book versus a subjective interpretation of what the text reminds an author of. But interestingly, the reminders in the *Pure Worship* book are, in most cases, quite similar to the antitypical explanations. Thus, most readers will not understand that these reminders are not antitypes. (My italics in the quotations.)

The temple 40:3-47:12

It pictures the “true tent,” which Jehovah put up, and not man. . . . (Hebrews 13:10–12, 20) (*Know Jehovah*, pages 384, 386)

It pictured God’s spiritual temple—his templelike arrangement for pure worship in our day. (*The Watchtower* of 1 August 2007, page 11)

But to emphasize Jehovah’s high standards for pure worship, Ezekiel’s temple vision gives us a detailed picture that impresses on our mind and heart *many lessons* about Jehovah’s standards. (*Pure Worship*, page 141)

The priesthood 44:10–16

The priestly class foreshadows the body of anointed Christians in our day. The refining of them took place in 1918 when Jehovah sat “as a refiner and cleanser” in his spiritual temple. (Malachi 3:1–5) (*The Watchtower* of 1 August 2007, page 10)

The priests of ancient Israel worshipped in a separate courtyard. Today, anointed Christians are not separated from their fellow worshippers in any physical sense, but they do enjoy a special relationship with Jehovah as his adopted children. (Gal. 4:4–6) At the same time, *anointed ones can find useful reminders* in Ezekiel’s vision. They note, for instance, that the priests were subject to counsel and discipline. (*Pure Worship*, page 158)

The chieftain 44:3; 45:8, 9

Elders with an earthly hope who have been appointed by holy spirit (Acts 20:28). So the chieftain class is now being groomed with the prospect of later

serving in an administrative capacity in the new world. (*The Watchtower* of 1 March 1999, page 16).

This chieftain *makes us think* particularly of congregation overseers today that are not spirit-anointed. (*Pure Worship*, page 221)

The fruitful trees 47:12

The symbolic trees picture God's spiritual provisions for restoring mankind to perfection. (*The Watchtower* of 1 August 2007, page 11)

Remember, those trees produced a new crop of delicious food every month, and their leaves provided healing (Ezek. 47:12) They thus *remind us* that we serve the God who generously feeds us and heals us in the most important way, spiritually. (*Pure Worship*, page 207)

The city 48:15–19, 30–35

“Jehovah-Shammah” is situated in “profane” land, indicating that it must represent something earthly. The city seems to represent the earthly administration that benefits those who will make up the righteous “new earth.” (2 Peter 3:13) Having gates on each side illustrates its openness. The overseers among God's people are to be approachable. (*The Watchtower* of 1 August 2007, page 11)

What, then, is the city that Ezekiel saw? Remember that he saw the city in the same vision in which he saw the land. (Ezek. 40:2; 45:1, 6) God's Word indicates that the land refers to a spiritual land, so the city must refer to a spiritual city. In general, what is conveyed by the word “city”? The word conveys the idea of people living together as a group and forming something structured and organized. Thus, the well-ordered city that Ezekiel saw—which was laid out as a perfect square—seems to represent a well-organized seat of administration. (*Pure Worship*, pages 219, 221)

The five examples above illustrate what I mean by a covert presentation. The *Know Jehovah* book, *The Watchtower* of March 1, 1999, and August 1, 2007 present Ezekiel's words as prophetic types of bigger things. This is rejected by the present GB. As I noted above, when we compare the presentations in the *Pure Worship* book with the other sources, we see that often the explanations are not very different. The difference is that the *Pure Worship* book does not present antitypes but rather what the GB and the writer of the book *are reminded of*. But I think most readers will not be able to ascertain this difference.

However, the river of lifegiving water amply illustrates the difference between taking the parts of the temple vision as prophetic types

foreshadowing antitypes versus taking the parts only *as reminders* that do not have any antitypical fulfillment.

The river of life-giving water 47:1–5

We notice that the life-giving water flows past the altar of sacrifice in the inner courtyard, instead of westward through the rear of the house right next to the Most Holy. This fact emphasizes that the Life-Giver, Jehovah, sends forth this “water of life” with full recognition of the ransom sacrifice of his Son and High Priest, Jesus Christ. . . .

A thousand cubits . . . ankle-deep. This would allow for more worshipers coming to the temple to drink of this life-giving water. . . .

“[A] thousand [cubits] . . . water up to the knees.” Reasonably, all the ransomed dead humans will not be restored to life on earth at one time.

“[A] thousand [cubits] . . . up to the hips.” How well the angel’s measuring in lengths of a thousand cubits reminds us of the numbers of the years of the Messiah’s reign—a thousand years! . . .

“[A] thousand [cubits] . . . water permitting swimming.” . . .

The symbolic “water of life” must be extended to the very last one of the ransomed dead of mankind. Symbolic water only hip deep will not suffice for this. (*Know Jehovah*, pages 387–392)

The water pictures Jehovah’s spiritual provisions for life, including the ransom sacrifice of Christ Jesus and the knowledge of God found in the Bible. (Jeremiah 2:13; John 4:7–26; Ephesians 5:25–27) The river progressively deepens to accommodate the influx of new ones who take up true worship. (Isaiah 60:22) The river will be flowing with the most potent water of life during the Millennium, and its waters will include further understanding obtained from the “scrolls” that will then be opened.—Revelation 20:12; 22:1, 2. (*The Watchtower* of 1 August 2007, page 11)

A river of blessings. In the Bible, rivers and water are often used to picture the flow of Jehovah’s life-giving blessings. Ezekiel saw such a river flowing from the temple, so the vision would have led God’s people to expect that Jehovah’s life-giving spiritual blessings would flow to them as long as they adhered to pure worship. . . .

Ancient: Once the exiles returned to their homeland, blessings flowed to them as they took part in the restoration of pure worship at the temple.

Jehovah richly blessed his obedient people, even as their numbers increased, making them thrive spiritually. . . .

Modern: In 1919 pure worship was restored, opening the way for an unprecedented flow of spiritual blessings to God’s faithful servants.

In the developing spiritual paradise, ever-growing numbers have benefited from the expanding flow of Jehovah's spiritual blessings and have come to life in a spiritual sense . . .

Future: After Armageddon, the flow of blessings from Jehovah will be physical as well as spiritual in nature.

Armageddon survivors will be joined by untold millions of resurrected ones, and Jehovah's blessings will be abundant for all. (*Pure Worship*, pages 203, 206)

The *Pure Worship* book takes the river of life-giving water in the general sense of *blessings from Jehovah*. The details in the book of Ezekiel do not seem to have any specific meaning because they have no prophetic force. For example, the mentioning of the "untold millions of resurrected ones" is not connected with the depth of the water or anything else in the vision. But the author *is reminded* of these millions. We note that "Jehovah's life-giving blessings" are mentioned. But the ransom sacrifice of Jesus is not included. To include the ransom sacrifice would mean that the river was a type that foreshadowed this sacrifice. The ransom sacrifice is mentioned several times. But the text does not say that it is foreshadowed by the river that passes the altar of sacrifice in the inner courtyard, as the *Know Jehovah* book shows.

The *Know Jehovah* book gives a logical antitypical explanation of the details in the vision of the life-giving river. The *Pure Worship* book does not show that the details have any meaning for us. But the whole vision reminds us of one thing, namely, Jehovah's blessings.

When we read paragraphs 13–21 (pages 207–210) in the *Pure Worship* book, including the heading "What the Vision Will Mean in Paradise," we get the impression that the vision is a prophecy whose details will be fulfilled in Paradise. But that is not the case. The question to paragraph 13 is: "What *lessons* may we today draw from those visionary trees?" These words show that the paragraph does not speak about a fulfillment of the vision of the life-giving river and the trees, but only about *the lessons* we can learn. And similarly, paragraphs 14 and 15 speak of *a lesson* and *a benefit*. The question to paragraph 20 is: "What arrangement for our benefit during the Millennium *reminds us* of the trees that Ezekiel saw?" Thus, the life-giving river and the trees refer to "blessings" that are not specified, according to the *Pure Worship* book. Then the authors specify these

blessings from other passages in the Bible. But the reader is led to believe that these specified blessings are fulfillments of details of the life-giving river and the trees.

In contrast, the *Know Jehovah* book takes the description of the life-giving water of the river as prophetic types. Is there **clear Scriptural evidence** for taking the details of Ezekiel's temple vision as types foreshadowing greater things? Absolutely! Chapter 37 of Ezekiel does not say that the vision about the dry bones represents prophetic types. However, the *Pure Worship* book refers to Acts 3:21 as evidence for viewing the vision as a restoration prophecy. I agree with that. The following chapters 38 and 39 describe Gog's attack and defeat, and the details are also restoration prophecies since the wicked must be removed before any restoration can occur. Then follows Ezekiel's vision of the temple, the river, and the distribution of the land. The different parts of this vision also deal with the restoration of all things. Therefore, to deny that the parts of the vision foreshadow bigger things in detail is inconsistent.

This new view of the Bible implies that great parts of the text of the Hebrew Scriptures are only "filling material" and do not have any independent **meaning** for us today. This view, in reality, undermines the view that every word in the Bible is inspired by God. Why should God inspire all these texts with so many specific details, but the details would not have a clear meaning?

There is also another side of this situation that questions the inspiration of the Bible, namely, that the authority is moved from the text of the Bible to human beings. When the authors of the *Know Jehovah* book asked, "To what do the details of the vision of the life-giving river refer," they worked with **the text** of the Bible. As humans, they could err in one or more of their explanations. But their focus was on the inspired text of the Bible. And their conclusions could be tested by the readers. The authors of the *Pure Worship* book followed the opposite approach. Their focus was not on the details of the inspired text but on what the text **reminded them of and which lessons** they believed we can learn from the text. This allegorical approach is highly subjective, and the readers are completely dependent on the judgments and views of the authors.

For 120 years the view has been that every word in the Bible is inspired by God, all nuances are important, and all accounts are included with a particular purpose. The new view undermines the old view of inspiration because:

- The details and nuances of the Bible text are not important.
- Great parts of the accounts in the Hebrew Scriptures have no direct prophetic meaning for us today.
- The purpose of much of the text of the Hebrew Scriptures is to remind us of moral values. The contents of the reminders is decided by the GB. Thus, the authority is moved from the text of the Bible to human beings, to the reminders decided by the GB.

ARE THE MEMBERS OF THE PRESENT GB MORE DISCREET THAN THE PREVIOUS LEADERS OF JW?

By way of the conclusion of this discussion of the new view of the text of the Bible, I would like to say that I do not use *ad hominem* arguments in my discussions with others. I prefer to discuss issues and texts and not persons. But in this situation, I feel compelled to make an exception. According to the life histories of the present members of the GB, none of them know Greek, Hebrew, or Aramaic — no member of the GB can analyze a single verse in the Bible in its original language. But these persons claim to be more discreet than previous leaders.¹⁰³ And now, they have discovered the *true* meaning of the text of the Bible, which has **“the hallmark of divine teaching.”** This is something that none of the previous leaders, from C. T. Russell to N. H. Knorr, some being scholars knowing the Biblical languages, had discovered!

There is a dramatic consequence of the new view of the Bible regarding types and antitypes: The books, *You May Survive Armageddon Into God’s New World* (1955), dealing exclusively with types and antitypes, a part of *“Let Your Name Be Sanctified”* (1961), and a part of *“The Nations Shall Know That*

103. *The Watchtower* of March 15, 2015 dealing with the new view of types and antitypes says: **“Jehovah has helped ‘the faithful and discreet slave’ to become steadily more discreet.”**

I Am Jehovah”—*How?* (1971) — all together 38 books — and hundreds of articles in *The Watchtower* are just bogus — the prophetic applications are fiction. As a person who has been a part of this organization for 59 years, and who has an intimate knowledge of the Bible and its original text, it is impossible for me to accept this view.

The consequence of the new view of the Bible on types and antitypes is that several books, in whole or in part, as well as hundreds of articles in *The Watchtower*, are just bogus—their prophetic applications are fiction.

THE SITUATION TODAY BASED ON THE NEW VIEW OF THE BIBLE

The new view of the Bible, that the nuances and subtleties of the text have no meaning, and that parts of the Bible text only has a moral meaning, has led to the special situation: In the present literature of JW, with a few exceptions, such as Jesus’ great prophecy, we do not find detailed studies of the text of the Bible. Most study articles in *The Watchtower* discuss simple, practical lessons of faith, endurance, godly devotion, and other vital qualities. To discuss these subjects is important, indeed. But when so little weight is put on the text of the Bible, the consequence is sad.

At the time when the interactive personal study of the Bible was encouraged, the Bible knowledge among the Witnesses was high.¹⁰⁴ We were encouraged to memorize scriptures and to write cross-references and chain-references in the margin of our Bibles, so we could effectively defend our faith. Many times, I and other Witnesses were told by those we visited: “You must have memorized the whole Bible!”

Today, when meditation is encouraged at the expense of Bible study, the Bible knowledge among the Witnesses is just a fraction of what it was earlier. How many Witnesses, including elders and pioneers, can, only by using their Bible, *prove* that Jesus was resurrected as a spirit or *prove* that

104. Two books published by the Watchtower Society encourage interactive study: *Your Youth—Getting the Best out of It* (1976) and *Questions Young People Ask—Answers That Work* (1989). The interactive study is directed toward decisions young people must make to live Christian lives. There is no encouragement of an interactive study of the text of the Bible.

there is both a heavenly and an earthly class? That was elementary knowledge when I became a Witness.

The argument is used that the situation today is different from the situation 50 years ago. People read less, and they prefer films and videos over written texts. This is, of course, true. And all the video clips at jw.org represent very good teaching. However, nothing is better for a Christian than a personal interactive study of the Bible. To illustrate: To get a driver's license represents hard work. One has to study many different texts, and to pass the exam, it is also necessary to memorize a lot. But I have never heard about a person who was too stupid or too lazy to get a driver's license. So, the question is: On which level do we as teachers put our teaching? Do we lower the level because of the spirit of our day, or do we raise the level to help persons become *Bible* students? To meditate on Jehovah's works and attributes is very important. But to experience an Aha! moment by learning a new valuable side of a scripture, based on personal study, will strengthen our faith much more than a week of intense meditation.

THE REVISED NEW WORLD TRANSLATION OF 2013

For some time, rumors had circulated that work was being done on a new edition of the *New World Translation*. And in 2013, the new version was released. When I got this new version and started to read it, I was very surprised and very disappointed. When the Hebrew/Aramaic part of the original NWT was translated into Norwegian, I was one of the consultants. When I studied each draft, I compared the English text and the Norwegian translation with the Hebrew and Aramaic text. I realized that the English translation was extremely accurate, and the same was true with the Norwegian translation. I have also studied the Greek part of the NWT in detail with the same result. The original NWT is a very fine scholarly work that is better than any other Bible translation, as far as accuracy is concerned.

What surprised me most with the new version was that the basic principles behind the original NWT that made it so excellent were rejected. The three characteristics that distinguish the original NWT from all other translations are 1) its accurate renderings of the nuances of Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic verbs, 2) its use of one English word for each word in the original text when the context allows it, and 3) the extreme care to

render all the nuances and subtleties of the original text into English. All three features were rejected by the present GB and the translators of NWT13. The result of this rejection is an inconsistent translation with a great number of errors.

The most important characteristic of NWT13, from a doctrinal point of view, is that it presents a new view of the Bible. The view of the translators of the original NWT, as is seen by the characteristics of their translation, was that because the whole Bible is inspired by God, all the nuances and subtleties of the original text are important and should be marked in translation. The views of the present GB and the translators of NWT13 are the very opposite: the nuances and subtleties of the original text are not important; therefore, there is no need to present these in translation. This view is seen throughout the translation and cannot be denied.

The consequence of this new view of the Bible is that the readers are led in the opposite direction of interactive learning. There is no invitation to the readers to work with the text on their own. That is not necessary because the translators have made all the needed interpretations of the text of the Bible. Thus, the NWT13 supports the new view of the GB regarding types and antitypes, that is discussed above — the authority is moved from the text of the Bible to humans, to the eight members of the GB.

DISCUSSION OF THE ARTICLES, "HOW CAN YOU CHOOSE A GOOD BIBLE TRANSLATION?" AND "THE 2013 REVISION OF THE NEW WORLD TRANSLATION"¹⁰⁵

The contents of the articles from 2008 and 2015 illuminates the true nature of NWT13.

Translation Principles

The first article discusses different kinds of translations and says:

A strictly word-for-word translation is often not the best possible way to capture the meaning of each Bible Verse. Why not? . . . 1. No two languages are exactly alike in grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure. . . . 2. The

105. *The Watchtower* of May 1, 2008, pages 18–22 and December 15, 2015, pages 14–17.

meaning of a word or an expression may change depending on the context in which it is used.

The words in the quotation are true, and one example used is Matthew 5:3, which is often translated as “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” This rendering could be taken to refer to persons who are mentally unbalanced and lacking in vitality and determination. The NWT84 rendering is “Happy are those conscious of their spiritual need.” And this non-literal rendering conveys the meaning of the Greek text in a fine way.

The NWT84 is a literal and concordant translation, and the translators have done their utmost to translate each word and each expression in the original languages in the same way in the target language. But in many cases, that is not possible. The article shows that the NWT84 uses nearly 16,000 English expressions to translate some 5,500 Greek terms, and over 27,000 English expressions to translate about 8,500 Hebrew terms. This is an average of about three different ways to render each Greek and Hebrew term. However, the true picture is that a great number of terms are given a uniform translation in English, and another great number of terms are translated in five, ten, or more different ways. The Hebrew word *yad* (“hand”) is rendered in 40 different ways. After presenting these numbers, the article says:

It is noteworthy that some English Translations use a greater variety of equivalents than the *New World Translation* and thus are less consistent.

Under the heading, “Finding the Best Translation,” the article says:

The Bible was written using the common, everyday languages of average people, such as farmers, shepherds, and fishermen. (Nehemiah 8:8, 12; Acts 4:13) Therefore, a good translation of the Bible makes the message it contains accessible to sincere people, regardless of their background. A desirable translation will also do the following:

- Accurately convey the original message that was inspired by God.— 2 Timothy 3:16
- Translate the meaning of words literally when the wording and structure of the original text allows for such a rendering in the target language.
- Communicate the correct sense of a word or a phrase when a literal rendering of the original-language expression would distort or obscure the meaning.
- Use natural, easy-to-understand language that encourages reading.

Is such a translation available? Millions of readers of this journal favor using the *New World Translation*. Why? Because they agree with the approach taken by its translation committee, as stated in the foreword to the first English edition: “We offer no paraphrase of the Scriptures. Our endeavor all through has been to give as literal a translation as possible, where modern English idiom allows and where a literal rendition does not for any clumsiness hide the thought.”

The whole article is instructive, and its conclusions are fine. What do we find when we see the revised NWT13 in the light of this article?

NWT13 uses a very fine modern language that is easier to understand than NWT84 (fourth item above). One reason for this is that NWT84 consistently expresses the nuances of the verbs, and that requires the use of more words than is the case in NWT13, where verb nuances normally are not expressed. Another reason is that NWT84, to a great extent, uses the sentence structure of the original text, and this structure is different from the English sentence structure. A third reason is that during the more than 50 years since the NWT was translated, the English language has changed; some words have acquired different meanings and connotations, and other words have become difficult to understand.

The basic point in the article is literal versus idiomatic renderings (second and third item above). A “desirable translation” is a translation where words and phrases are translated literally when the text allows for such a rendering. And here, NWT13 is inferior to NWT84.

The Renderings of *nəp̄æs̄* and *psykhē*

I have already mentioned that the NWT84 renders the Hebrew word *nəp̄æs̄* and the Greek word *psykhē* consistently with “soul,” while NWT13 uses many different renderings. *The Watchtower* of December 15, 2015 discussed different sides of NWT13. Regarding “soul,” we read:

¹¹ In some languages, translating the Hebrew word *ne'phesh* and the Greek word *psyche* consistently with a term similar to the English “soul” created some confusion. Why? Because the equivalent terms could give the impression that the “soul” is an immaterial part of man. That could reflect the mistaken view that it is something like a ghost and not man himself. Hence, approval was given to render “soul” as indicated by the context, in line with the meanings already provided in the appendixes of the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures—With References*. Yes, priority was given to

making the text immediately understood, and helpful renderings were often put in footnotes.¹⁰⁶

The quotation represents a different view of the text of the Bible and of how the text of the Bible should be taught, compared with the view of the translators of NWT84 and the author of the article from 2008 dealing with “a Good Bible Translation.” The point behind a literal translation is “when the text allows.” Let us illustrate this point. In Romans 12:12, Paul uses the expression “to the spirit boiling.” A literal translation of this expression would be meaningless. Therefore, NWT13 has the rendering, “Be aglow with the spirit.” Romans 12:20 literally says, “for doing this, coals of fire you will heap on his head.” A handbook on Bible translation says:

The imagery of the last clause in this verse is difficult, though all translations seem to prefer to retain the imagery rather than to change the metaphor into a non-metaphor. “For by doing this you will heap burning coals on his head” is perhaps best taken in the sense of “for by doing this you will make him ashamed.”¹⁰⁷

Almost all who read Romans 12:20 will misunderstand the meaning. The fact that all translations render this clause literally, illustrates the words of Paul in Romans 10:13–17, that Bible readers need teachers in order to understand the text. Those who translated the original NWT, used one English word for each original word whenever possible. By this, they invited the readers to work with the text and find the meaning of each word by the help of the context. Moreover, they also sent preachers to help the readers to understand the text, such as the metaphor in Romans 12:20.

The reason why NWT13 uses many different words for *napas*Σ and *psykhē* is that the readers would not be led to believe that the “soul” is an immaterial part of man. But this argument is strange indeed, particularly for an English translation. Please consider the use of *napas*Σ in Genesis chapters 1 and 2 in NWT84 and NWT13:

1:20 (NWT84): “Let the waters swarm forth a swarm of living souls.”

1:20 (NWT13): “Let the waters swarm with living creatures.”

106. *The Watchtower* of December 15, 2015, page 11, ¶11.

107. Newman and Nida, *The Translator’s Handbook on Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, page 243.

2:7 (NWT84): And Jehovah God proceeded to form the man out of dust from the ground and to blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man came to be a living soul.

2:7 (NWT13): And Jehovah God went on to form the man out of dust from the ground and blow into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living person.

The renderings of NWT84 clearly show that animals and humans **are** souls. By using these literal expressions, it is clear for the reader that the “soul” is not an immaterial part of man. If the use of “soul” in a passage would be ambiguous, a footnote could explain the situation, and a reference could be made to Genesis 1:20 and 2:7. My conclusion is that “the text allows” the use of the word “soul” for *נַפְשׁוֹ* and *psykhē* in all the occurrences of the words, as does NWT84. To use many different words in English is a violation of the second item in *The Watchtower* article on translation.

The renderings of Hebrew imperfective verbs

Below I criticize the translators’ rendering of Hebrew verbs. In connection with this, I would like to say that the text of the NWT13 reveals that the translators have a good understanding of Classical Hebrew. They have made several elegant renderings that would not have been possible without a detailed knowledge of Hebrew. My criticism of their lack of knowledge of the force of Hebrew verbs and their aspects (“states”) can also be applied to most other Bible translators.¹⁰⁸ But if the translators had learned from the original translators of the NWT, their translation of verbs would have been more accurate.

Item 2 in *The Watchtower* article from 2008 discussing Bible translation is also violated by the renderings of Hebrew verbs, which are explained this way:

108. The Hebrew conjugations, perfect and imperfect, are in *The Watchtower* article from 2015 called “states.” This may cause confusion, because “states” is a grammatical category that has nothing to do with perfect and imperfect. Verbs like “love” and “rest” are states (stative verbs), and “walk” and “kill” are actions. Both stative verbs and action verbs are used in the perfect and imperfect conjugations. Hebrew imperfect and perfect should be called “aspects.” The important point is that when I use the word “aspect,” I refer to the same categories that in the article are called “states.” At the end of the quotation, “aspects” are used.

Why has the rendering of many Hebrew verbs been simplified? The two main Hebrew verb states are the imperfect, denoting continuous action, and perfect, denoting completed action. Past editions of the New World Translation consistently rendered Hebrew imperfect verbs with a verb and an auxiliary term, such as “proceeded to” or “went on to” in order to show continuous or repeated action. Emphatic expressions such as “certainly,” “must,” and “indeed” were used to show the completed action of perfect verbs.

In the 2013 revision, such auxiliary expressions are not used unless they add to the meaning. For example, there is no need to emphasize that God repeatedly said, “Let there be light,” So in the revision the imperfect verb “say” is not rendered as continuous. (Gen. 1:3) However, Jehovah evidently called to Adam repeatedly, so this is still highlighted at Genesis 3:9 with the rendering “kept calling.” Overall, verbs are rendered in a simpler way, focusing on the action rather than on the incomplete and complete aspects reflected in the Hebrew. A related benefit is that this helps to recapture, to an extent, the terseness of the Hebrew.¹⁰⁹

The explanation above shows that the translators of NWT13 did not understand the real force and meaning of the Hebrew verbs. It is not true that “the imperfect [imperfective verbs] [denotes] continuous action, and perfect [perfective verbs], [denotes] completed action,” as the following points show.

- 1) All action verbs, except the instantaneous ones, express continuous action. This action is expressed by the lexical meaning and the aktionsart of each verb. Thus, both the perfective and imperfective aspect are used with continuous action verbs.
- 2) The perfective aspect and the imperfective aspect (Hebrew perfect and imperfect) are used with verbs whose actions are completed and with verbs whose actions are not completed, as the examples below show.

Genesis 2:6: But a mist was ascending (*imperfect*) from the earth, and it caused the whole surface of the ground to be irrigated (*perfect consecutive*).

Isaiah 11:8, 9: And the suckling will play (*perfect consecutive*) near the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will stretch out (*perfect*) his hand over the viper’s nest.⁹ They will not be doing (*imperfect*) any harm or be causing ruin (*imperfect*) in all my holy mountain, because the earth will be filled (*perfect*) with the knowledge of Jehovah as the waters are covering (*participle*) the sea.

109. *The Watchtower* of December 15, 2015, pages 16 and 17.

Genesis 2:6 describes a situation that happened before man was created; therefore, when the words were written down, the situation was completed. An imperfective and a perfective verb are used, and this shows that both aspects can describe completed actions. Isaiah 11:8 refers to the future, and the actions described are not completed. These uncompleted actions are expressed by two perfects, one perfect consecutive, and two imperfects. This shows that both perfective and imperfective verbs can describe situations that are not completed.

- 3) When all action verbs express continuous action, and both the perfective and the imperfective aspect can express actions that are completed and actions that are not completed, what is the function of each of the aspects? I will illustrate the functions with the use of the English aspects.
 - a) Yesterday, Rita was walking in the garden (imperfective clause).
 - b) Rita has walked in the garden (perfective clause).

The verb “walk” is durative (continuous action is expressed) and dynamic (change is expressed). Both characteristics are included in the verbs in the two clauses above, in the top clause, which is imperfective, and in the bottom clause, which is perfective. What is the difference between the two clauses? The difference is ***what is made visible*** for the readers!

When we communicate and describe actions, usually we do not focus on or make visible the whole action, but only on a part of the action. In the imperfective clause, a small part of the progressive action after the beginning and before the end (“walking”) is made visible. In the perfective clause, only the end of the action is made visible (“has walked”). To walk represents continuous action. But this continuous action is only ***made visible*** by the imperfective aspect.

The examples show that aspects only function as lenses or peepholes, and they make visible a part of the action that is expressed by the lexical meaning and the aktionsart of the verb. We note that the imperfective aspect in the example above is used in a situation that was completed yesterday.

There is one pitfall we must avoid, and that is to conclude that the Hebrew aspects are similar to the English ones. In English, each aspect has only one option. But in Hebrew the imperfective aspect has six different options and the perfective aspect has five different options. The

wrong definitions of continuous action / completed action of the Hebrew aspects are based on the view that the Hebrew aspects are similar to the English aspects.¹¹⁰

I will now discuss two views of the Hebrew aspects expressed in the quotation from *The Watchtower* of 2015, views that are wrong.

In the 2013 revision, such auxiliary expressions are not used unless they add to the meaning. For example, there is no need to emphasize that God repeatedly said, “Let there be light,” So in the revision the imperfect verb “say” is not rendered as continuous. (Gen. 1:3) However, Jehovah evidently called to Adam repeatedly, so this is still highlighted at Genesis 3:9 with the rendering “kept calling.”

The problem with this quotation is that the Hebrew aspects are treated as objective properties and not as “peepholes” that make a part of an action visible. To be very clear: The Hebrew imperfective aspect—called “imperfect” in the quotation—*never* signals repeated action when it is used with a durative verb, such as “call”! Repeated (iterative) action is signaled in Hebrew when the imperfective aspect is used with a semelfactive (instantaneous) verb and never when it is used with a durative verb. I again use English as an illustration.

- c) John has called his friend Peter.
- d) Yesterday, John was calling his friend Peter.
- e) Rita has knocked at the door.
- f) Rita was knocking at the door.
- g) John called his friend repeatedly.
- h) John was calling his friend repeatedly.

The verb “call” is used in clause c) with the perfective aspect and in clause d) with the imperfective aspect. But the aspects do not tell us whether John called one or several times. Example e) uses the semelfactive verb “knock” with the perfective aspect. But we cannot know whether Rita knocked one or several times. However, example f) uses the semelfactive verb “knock” with the imperfective aspect, and the only possible interpretation is that Rita was knocking again and again. Thus, the

110. A detailed explanation of the meaning of the Hebrew aspects, as well as examples of how verbs can be translated, can be found in the book, Furuli, *The Fallacy of Prophetic Perfect — With Translations of Verses From the Prophets*.

way to express an iterative situation is by using a semelfactive verb with the imperfective aspect. An iterative situation can also be expressed by the use of an adverbial, as seen in examples g) and h). The two examples show that the adverbial makes both the perfective and the imperfective clause iterative. Below are two Hebrew examples with semelfactive verbs.

Joshua 12:1: These are the kings of the land whom the sons of Israel struck (*perfect*).

Joshua 8:22: And Israel kept striking (*imperfect*) them down until there was not survivor or escapee remaining.

The Hebrew verb *nāka* (“strike”) is semelfactive. The first example uses the verb with the perfective aspect. Striking several kings implied a lot of progressive action. But this action is not made visible. The second example uses the imperfective aspect with the same verb, and progressive action is made visible.

The discussion above shows that the argument in the quotation from *The Watchtower* of 2015, that to use “kept calling” in Genesis 3:9, because Jehovah evidently called Adam repeatedly, is wrong. The imperfective aspect *never* expresses repeated action with a durative verb!

The terseness of the Hebrew language

The last clause of the quotation from *The Watchtower* of 2015 says:

Overall, verbs are rendered in a simpler way, focusing on the action rather than on the incomplete or complete aspects reflected in the Hebrew. A related benefit is that this helps to recapture, to an extent, the terseness of the Hebrew.

It is not possible to render Hebrew verbs *in a simpler way* than NWT84 does without losing a part of the meaning and nuances of the verbs. Moreover, the clause “focusing on the action rather than on the incomplete or complete actions reflected in the Hebrew” betrays a lack of knowledge of the Hebrew language. The focus on the actions of the verbs can only be done by analyzing the combination of the lexical meaning, the actionsart, and the aspects of a verb, as well as adverbs and other particles in the context, and the place of the verb in the sentence — and by expressing these nuances in the English text. By ignoring the aspects, wrongly described as “incomplete or complete actions,” the original nuances and subtleties are lost. This is seen in the examples below.

I will now discuss the claim that by dropping the auxiliary verbs used by NWT84, the reader recaptures, “to an extent, the terseness of the Hebrew.” The word “terseness” is defined as “the quality or state of being marked by using only few words to convey much meaning.” (Merriam-Webster). It is true that Hebrew uses fewer words than English to express the same meaning—Hebrew is a terse language. But the consequence of this is that to express the nuances and terseness of Hebrew verbs, **more words must be used** in English than in Hebrew. Thus, the consistent use of auxiliary verbs in NWT84 helps the reader to recapture, “to an extent, the terseness of Hebrew.” But the failure of this use in NWT13 causes the reader to lose sight of this terseness. So, the situation is the very opposite of what the last clause of the quotation above says.

I will use Isaiah 24:3–5 to illustrate how single words and the order in which they occur signal meanings that must be expressed with several words in English. First, I give a word-for-word translation, and then I give a translation where the nuances and subtleties of the terse text of Hebrew are expressed, and lastly I quote the text of NWT13.

24:3a

To lay waste (*infinitive absolute*) lay waste (*imperfect*) the land and to plunder (*infinitive absolute*) plunder (*imperfect*).

The land will without fail be laid waste (*infinitive absolute+imperfect*), and it will certainly be plundered (*imperfect*).

The land will be completely emptied (*infinitive absolute+imperfect*); It will be completely plundered (*imperfect*).

The Hebrew text has five words,¹¹¹ my translation has 14 words, and NWT13 has 11 words. The subject of the first clause is “the land.” In the second clause, “the land” as the subject is implied, and therefore I use “it” as the subject. Each of the infinitive absolutes is of the same root as the following imperfect, and that signals emphasis. Therefore, I use 14 English words to convey all the nuances of the Hebrew text. The NWT13 has marked the emphasis expressed by the infinitive absolutes together with the imperfects.

24:3b

111. The definite article and the conjunction “and” are not counted as independent words because they are prefixed to one word each.

For *yhw* speaks (*perfect*) word this.

For Jehovah himself has spoken (*perfect*) this word.

For Jehovah has spoken (*perfect*) this word.

The Hebrew has five words, my translation has seven words, and NWT13 has six words. In most cases, the verb stands before the subject. But in this clause, the subject, *yhw*, stands before the verb. This shows that the subject is stressed, and I express this by using the pronoun “himself.” The NWT13 does not stress the subject.

24:4a

mourn (*perfect*) wither (*perfect*) the land.

It will indeed mourn (*perfect*), the land will certainly wither (*perfect*).

The land mourns (*perfect*); it is wasting away (*perfect*).

The Hebrew text has three words, my translation has nine words, and NWT13 has seven words. The syntax of 4a is the opposite of the syntax in 3a. In 3a, the subject, “the land,” was connected with the first verb. In connection with the second verb, the same subject was implied, and it was expressed by “it.” In 4a, the subject “the land” is connected with the second verb. In connection with the first verb, the same subject is implied and is expressed by “it.”

A strong emphasis is expressed by the three Hebrew words. First, the two perfects stand side by side without any *waw* connecting them, and both are sentence initial. Second, there is a play on words because the spelling of the two verbs with slightly different meanings differs only in one letter—the verbs are *'ābāl* and *nābāl*.

The first verb with the meaning “mourn” constitutes one independent clause, “it will mourn.” But because it is sentence initial, and therefore emphatic, my translation is “It will indeed mourn.” The subject “it” refers to the subject of the second clause, to “the land.” Because the perfect of the second clause is sentence initial, it is emphatic as well, and I translate the clause as, “the land will certainly wither.” Each clause is emphatic in its own right. And used together, the emphasis is even stronger. The translators of NWT neither have understood that the verbs of both clauses are emphatic nor the rhetoric point of the clauses. They have even destroyed the rhetorical point by using “the land” as subject in the first clause instead of “it.”

In modern prose, we also use a construction similar to the Hebrew one to get the attention of the readers or the audience: I start a lecture by saying, “They will be destroyed.” The audience wonders who “they” are. Then I say, “God’s enemies will be destroyed.” Now I have the full attention of the audience when I explain the identity of God’s enemies.

24:4b

Fade away (*perfect*) wither (*perfect*) the productive land.

It will indeed fade away (*perfect*); the productive land will surely wither (*perfect*).

The productive land withers (*perfect*); it is fading away (*perfect*).

Verse 4b has the same syntactic construction as 4a. The Hebrew text has three words, my translation has 11 words, and NWT13 has eight words. The subject of the first clause is implied, and is expressed by “it.” This pronoun refers to the subject of the second clause. This subject is “the productive land,” while the subject of the second clause in 4a was “the land.” Here we also find a play of words: the word translated “fade away” is *’āmāl*, and the word translated “wither” is *nābāl*. The unusual construction of the two clauses in 4a expresses strong emphasis, and the same is true with the similar construction of the two clauses in 4b. When there are two pairs of clauses, each with strong emphasis, the total emphasis of the four clauses becomes even stronger. The subjects of the two clauses in 4a are “the land,” and the subject in the two clauses in 4b is “the productive land.” The fact that the two subjects are synonyms adds to the emphasis. The translators of NWT 13 have again destroyed the rhetoric point of the clauses by using “the productive land” as subject in the first clause instead of “it.”

24:4c–5a

Fade away (*perfect*) prominent people the land and the land defile (*perfect*) under its inhabitants.

The prominent people of the land will undoubtedly wither (*perfect*) because the very land has been defiled (*perfect*) by its inhabitants.

The prominent people of the land wither (*perfect*).⁵ The land has been polluted (*perfect*) by its inhabitants.

The Hebrew has eight words, my translation has 19 words, and NWT13 has 14 words. The emphatic syntax is continued, both because the perfect of 4c is sentence initial (marked by “undoubtedly”), and because the

verb *'amal* (“fade away”) is used, as in the next-to-the-last clause. The use of this verb connects this clause with the clauses in 4a and 4b.

But here a new element is added. In the previous four clauses, the subjects were “the land” and “the productive land.” But now the subject is “the prominent people of the land.” And an explanation is added: The inhabitants have defiled the land. The subject, “the land,” in 5a stands before the verb, and therefore it is stressed. I express this by the adjective “very.”

The clause in 5a is connected to the previous clause by the conjunction *waw*. This conjunction is, in most cases, translated by “and.” But because the clause shows the reason why the prominent people will wither, I translate *waw* as “because,” which is a legitimate translation of *waw*.

The verses that I have discussed above show in an excellent way how English readers can recapture “to an extent, the terseness of Hebrew.” The Hebrew text of the verses has 24 words, my translations have 60 words, and NWT13 has 46 words. To convey all the nuances of the terse Hebrew text to English readers, I cannot see how it is possible to use fewer words than I have done. Thus, to recapture “to an extent, the terseness of Hebrew” is based on the use of many English words showing how much meaning there is in much fewer Hebrew words.

I will make a few comments on the text of NWT13. As for the accuracy of the renderings, I refer to my translation into English of the 36 verses of Psalm 68.¹¹² I have compared the texts of the NIV and NRSV of this Psalm with the Hebrew text. I demonstrate that these translations have failed to convey 39 nuances in the Hebrew text: the conjugations (imperfect and perfect) are not distinguished 19 times, emphasis based on word order is not marked 16 times, and the hifil stem is not treated correctly in four instances. The NWT13 also fails to convey these nuances, while most of them are found in the NWT84. The examples above are taken from one chapter with 36 verses. When we realize that this is a very small fraction of the Hebrew and Aramaic parts of the Bible, we also realize that there are thousands of nuances in the original text that are not conveyed by idiomatic and interpretative Bible translations. There are a

112. Furuli, *The Fallacy of Prophetic Perfect — With Translations of Verses From the Prophets*, pages 327–333.

little more than 27,000 verses in the Hebrew Bible. If the frequency of nuances that are not conveyed by idiomatic translations is the same in these verses as in Psalm 68, there are about 29,000 nuances that are not conveyed to the English readers. Besides, there are many other nuances of lexical and syntactic meaning that are not conveyed.¹¹³ Moreover, many nuances that are not in the original text are added in idiomatic translations. In chapter 5, I refer to some words that are added in NWT13 but are not in the original text.

I have an exam in applied linguistics (translation) from the University of Oslo, and I am a trained translator. When I read a translation, I try to figure out why a certain rendering is chosen. But honestly speaking, in many cases, I do not understand the reasons for the choices of the translators of NWT13. Below I give one example of an inconsistent translation, one example where the meaning of an important passage is destroyed, one example where the reading of NWT13 will mislead the readers, and one example of a wrong translation that destroys an important doctrine. There are many similar examples that I do not mention.

INCONSISTENT TRANSLATIONS

Examples of inconsistent translations are the renderings of the Greek word *mnemeion*.

Table 6.3 Renderings of the Greek word mnemeion

Matthew 28:8; John 5:28.	memorial tomb(s).	No footnote.
Matthew 8:28; 23:29; 27:52, 60.	tomb(s).	Footnotes, Or “memorial tombs.”
Mark 5:2; 6:29; 15:46; 16:2.	tomb(s).	Footnotes, Or “memorial tombs.”
Luke 11: 44, 47; 23:55; 24:2, 9, 22, 24.	tomb(s).	Footnotes, Or “memorial tombs.”

113. *The Watchtower* of December 15, 2015, page 14, tells that NWT13 has 10% fewer words than NWT84. One reason is that the nuances of Hebrew verbs are, in most cases, not conveyed. Another reason is that in many instances we find “shortcuts,” where some Hebrew words that are viewed as insignificant are not translated at all.

John 11:17, 31, 38; 12:17; 19:41; 20:1.	tomb(s).	Footnotes, Or “memorial tombs.”
Acts 13:29.	tomb.	Footnotes, Or “memorial tombs.”
Mark 16:3, 8.	tomb(s).	No footnotes.
John 19:42; 20:2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 11.	tomb(s).	No footnotes.

NWT84 translates all the occurrences of *mnemeion* with “memorial tomb(s).” NWT13 uses this rendering only two places, in John 5:28 and Matthew 28:8. This rendering is particularly important in John 5:28. If the rendering in this passage had been “tombs,” a natural conclusion would have been that *all* human beings would get a resurrection because all the dead are in tombs.

In 22 passages, the words “tomb” or “tombs” are used. In all these passages, there is a footnote saying, “Or ‘memorial tombs.’” This is rather strange. When two passages have the rendering “memorial tomb” without an alternative rendering in footnotes, the translators show that this—“tombs” with the qualification “memorial” is the true meaning of *mnemeion*. On this basis, I do not understand why the translators use “tomb(s)” without qualification in these 21 passages.

We also note that in nine places, the word “tomb(s)” without a footnote is used. And in one place, the word “graves” is used.

A FAILURE TO EXPRESS THE FORCE OF THE GREEK IMPERFECTIVE ASPECT

One of the most quoted verses by JW in the Christian Greek Scriptures is John 17:3. In *The Watchtower* of March 1, 1992, page 23, there is a very instructive article discussing the rendering “taking in knowledge.” I quote most of this article:

“This means everlasting life, their taking in knowledge of you, the only true God, and of the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ.” (John 17:3) So said Jesus in prayer to his heavenly Father, and in this way he showed a vital prerequisite for gaining eternal life. Why, though, does the *New World Translation* render this verse “taking in knowledge of . . . God” instead of

“know . . . God,” as most other translations of the Bible express it?—See also the footnote to John 17:3.

The Greek word here translated ‘take in knowledge’ or ‘know’ is a form of the verb *gi-no'sko*. And the rendering in the *New World Translation* is designed to bring out as fully as possible the meaning of that word. The basic meaning of *gi-no'sko* is to “know,” but the Greek word has various shades of meaning. Note the following definitions:

“GINOSKO (*ginōskō*) signifies to be taking in knowledge, to come to know, recognize, understand, or to understand completely.”

(*Expository Dictionary of Testament Words*, W. E. Vine) Hence, rendering *gi-no'sko* ‘take in knowledge’ is not ‘changing the Bible,’ as critics of the *New World Translation* have alleged. In a discussion of the various shades of meaning the word can encompass, renowned lexicographer James Hope Moulton states: “The present simplex, *ginwskein*, is durative, ‘to be taking in knowledge.’” — *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*.

A Grammatical Analysis of the Greek New Testament explains *gi-no'sko* as it appears at John 17:3 as “implying a continuous process.” A further comment on this Greek word appears in *Word Studies in the New Testament*, by Marvin R. Vincent. This says: “Eternal life consists in knowledge, or rather the *pursuit* of knowledge, since the present tense marks *a continuance, a progressive perception.*” (Italics in the original.) A. T. Robertson’s *Word Pictures in the New Testament* suggests translating the word “should keep on knowing.”

Therefore, in the original Greek Jesus’ words at John 17:3 imply continuous effort to get to know the true God and his Son.

In order to convey the imperfective meaning of Greek present, the rendering “taking in knowledge” is excellent. However, the GB and the translators of NWT13 have rejected this accurate rendering that is stressing the continuous action of acquiring knowledge that never stops. Instead, they have made a static rendering:

This means everlasting life, their coming to know you, the only true God, and the one whom you sent forth, Jesus Christ.

The use of the participle indicates that those who will gain everlasting life must go through a process that leads to a final result: they know God. And that is the end. The force of the imperfective verb *ginōskō* is a process that is continuing with no end in view. Therefore, NWT13 has a rendering that contradicts the force of the imperfective verb.

I can only guess why the translators of NWT13 have rejected the excellent rendering of NWT84. One possibility is that the GB and the translators disagree with the conclusions of the article in *The Watchtower* of

1992. Another possibility, which is likely, is that the GB and the translators do not understand the real force of the imperfective aspect in Greek and that they believe that their rendering accords with the imperfective force of the verb.

THE IMPORTANCE OF RENDERING CONJUNCTIONS CORRECTLY

First Corinthians chapters 5 and 6 have a list of nine nouns and one substantivized adjective that are disfellowshipping offenses. The renderings of nine of the nouns in NWT13 show that they refer to concrete clearly identifiable actions. However the plural form of the noun *pleonektēs* is rendered as “greedy people,” and “greed” is a desire or a notion that is very difficult to identify. And a person cannot be disfellowshipped because of a desire.

In the pages 242-244, I argue that the idea of “greed” (“an insatiable desire to have more”) is nonexistent in the Hebrew Scriptures and the Christian Greek Scriptures, and that the meaning of the noun *pleonektēs* is “exploiter” (one who uses someone or something unfairly for one’s own advantage). The use of conjunction in 1 Corinthians 5:10 support the concrete and clearly identifiable action of exploiting in contrast with the abstract desire of “greed.” This is seen in NWT84 where the conjunctions are correctly rendered but not in NWT13 where the contrast between the conjunctions is not shown. The first quotation of 1 Corinthians 5:9, 10 below is from NWT84 and the second is from NWT13:

⁹ In my letter I wrote YOU to quit mixing in company with fornicators,¹⁰ not [meaning] entirely with the fornicators of this world or (ē) the greedy persons (*pleonektēs*) (*kai*) **and** extortioners (*harpax*) or (ē) idolaters.

⁹ In my letter I wrote you to stop keeping company with sexually immoral people,¹⁰ not meaning entirely with sexual immoral people of this world or (ē) the greedy people (*pleonektēs*) (*kai*) **or** extortioners (*harpax*) or (ē) idolaters.

I have marked the conjunctions “and” and “or” in different colors because these are the important words of the construction. In the Greek text, the noun *pleonektēs* has the article, and it is followed by the conjunction “and” and the substantivized adjective *harpax* is without article. Robertson and Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, page 105, has the four words *tois pleonektais kai harpaxin* in Greek letters, and we read:

These form a single class, coupled by the single article and the *kai* and separated from each of the other classes by *ē*.

The Greek letter *ēta* (*ē*) means “or.” The NWT84 correctly puts “or” after “the fornicators (*pornois*) of this world” and after “extortioners” (*harpax*). This shows that Paul in verse 10 mentions three different classes, 1) *pornois*, 2) *pleonektēs* and *harpax*, and 3) *eidōlōlatrais*. What does it mean that *pleonektēs* and *harpax* constitute one single class?

Louw and Nida, *A Greek-English Lexicon Based on Semantic Domains* in the Gramcord electronic version has a table of words showing what “one single class” means.

Table 1.2 linguistic units coupled by *kai*

<i>ouranos kai gē</i>	Heaven and earth	Mark 13:31
<i>limnē tou pyros kai theiou</i>	Lake of fire and sulphur	Revelation 20:10
<i>argyrion kai khryision</i>	Silver and gold	Acts 20:33
<i>koinōneō haimatos kai sarkos</i>	Share blood and flesh	Hebrews 2:14
<i>akbhlys kai skotos piptei</i>	Mistiness and darkness fell	Acts 13:11
<i>Ho nomos kai hoi profētai</i>	The law and the prophets	Matthew 5:17

As a comment to the first entry in table 1.2, Louw and Nida write:
a more or less fixed phrase equivalent to a single lexical item.

The point here is that the words that are bound together with “and” (*kai*) complement each other so closely that they function together as one unit. The words do not have exactly the same meaning, but they have meanings that are of the same kind and complement each other.

If we apply this to the two Greek words *pleonektēs* and *harpax*, these words must also be of the same “class” or kind and complement each other in order to constitute one linguistic unit. The meaning of *harpax* is easy to find. The verb *harpazō* means, according to Mounce Greek Dictionary, “to seize, as a wild beast, take away by force, snatch away.” And the meaning of the adjective *harpax* is, “ravenous, ravening as a wild beast; met. rapacious, given to extortion and robbery, an extortioner.”

Because the basic meaning of *harpax* is to take something away by the use of force, I prefer the rendering “robber” for this word. Because Paul makes the words *harpax* (“robber”) and *pleonektēs* into one unit, and

harpax means taking something away by force, we will expect that *pleonektēs* has a meaning of the same kind.

The term “to exploit” means “to use someone or something unfairly for your own advantage”¹¹⁴, and an exploiter is someone who does this. The ideas of unfairly using something to one’s own advantage and taking something from someone by force share the connotation of exacting gain from someone without their consent and so may function as one unit. In other words, “exploiters” and “robbers” would make an excellent pairing to form a single unit.

However, the terms “greedy people” and “robbers” would not function well as two parts of one unit because greediness is an excessive desire, a state of mind, while robbery indicates different actions by the use of force. Therefore, that Paul couples the words *pleonektēs* and *harpax* into one single unit is strong evidence in favor of taking *pleonektēs* as having the meaning “exploiter.” But the important fact that Paul uses the words *pleonektēs* and *harpax* as one linguistic unit is not conveyed to the readers of NWT13.

A RENDERING THAT CAN DECEIVE THE READERS

Jehovah’s Witnesses preach the good news from house to house. Consider the following situation: A householder asks about the destiny of the earth, whether it will be burned to ashes or not. The Witness answers that the earth will never be destroyed, and he quotes Ecclesiastes 1:4 (NWT13): “A generation is going, and a generation is coming. But the earth remains forever.” But the case is that the householder has been deceived because the Hebrew word *’olam* refers to a time period of undisclosed length and not to a period that never ends. So the “evidence” used is not the Hebrew text of Ecclesiastes but the view of the translators of NWT13.

I have never seen any evidence that the Hebrews of old held the idea of a time period that *never* would end. At most, they could possibly ascertain a period whose end they did not see. So, I question whether any word in the Hebrew Bible should be translated as “forever.”¹¹⁵ In any case, whether Solomon used the word *’olam* in the sense of “a period of undisclosed length” or “a period of which I cannot see the end,” we do

114. <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/exploit>.

115. Furuli, *The Fallacy of Prophetic Perfect — With Translations of Verses From the Prophets*, pages 310, 311.

not know. But the NWT13 translators have read a modern idea into Ecclesiastes 1:4, an idea that can deceive the readers. I simply cannot understand why the GB and the translators have rejected the excellent rendering “time indefinite” of NWT84.

A RENDERING THAT DESTROYS A BASIC DOCTRINE

Most scholars believe that the Babylonian captivity of the Jews lasted around 50 years. But JW believe that it lasted 70 years, as the Bible says. (Jeremiah 25:11, 12; Daniel 9:2; 2 Chronicles 36:21) However, the rendering of Jeremiah 25:9 in NWT13 will destroy this belief. Below I compare the two NWT translations (My italics.):

NWT84: And I will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants and against *all these nations round about.*

NWT13: And I will bring them against this land and against its inhabitants and against *all these surrounding nations.*

The rendering of NWT13 is wrong. To use the word “surrounding” is a violation of lexical meaning and syntax. The position of “all these nations” in relation to something is **not** stated, and the word *sābib* can rightly be rendered by “round about.” If the reference was to “the surrounding nations,” the period of 70 years would, according to the context, refer to these nations and not to the Jews. Moreover, because each of these nations would not serve Nebuchadnezzar II for exactly 70 years, this year-figure must be symbolic and may possibly refer to around 50 years.

Based on a detailed study of the context, a strong case can be made for the identification of “all these nations round about” as the tribes and clans that were **inside** the land of Judah and Jerusalem.¹¹⁶

The wrong translation of Jeremiah 25:9 is a typical example of problems created by idiomatic and interpretative translations when the translators do not take the nuances of the text into account.

SOME MISLEADING STATEMENTS IN APPENDIX A4 IN NWT13

There are several problems with the statements of Appendix A4, and I discuss some of these below.

116. Ibid., pages 300–304.

A4: *In Hebrew, the name Jehovah comes from a verb that means “to become.”*

The claim that “Jehovah” comes from a verb is pure speculation. There is no link between *yhwh* and any verb. This misunderstanding may be based on the failure to realize that the last “h” in *yhwh* is a vowel, as final “h” is in most Hebrew words. Thus, the consonants of God’s name are *yhw*, and not *hwh*. The evidence for this is the great number of Hebrew inscriptions where some personal names begin with *yhw* and others end with *yhw*. But no name begins or ends with *hwh*.¹¹⁷

A4:

יהוה הוה

The verb *HWH*: “to become”

The picture above will mislead the readers. The verb “to become” that is mentioned in the quotation above is here written in Old Hebrew, Aramaic, and Latin letters. The readers will naturally believe that these Hebrew letters with the meaning “to become” occur in ancient manuscripts. But there is no clear evidence that a verb *hwh* ever existed in Hebrew.¹¹⁸ The verb with the meaning “to be/become” is *hyh*, and it occurs 3,576 times in the Hebrew Bible.

A4: *Thus, the understanding of the New World Bible Translation Committee is that God’s name means “He Causes to Become.”*

This is a cautious statement and not a statement of fact. However, *Insight on the Scriptures II*, 5, claims as a fact that “He Causes to Become” is the meaning of God’s name. If a verb *hwh* existed, and if it had a hifil form (a causative form), this form would have been *yahweh*. This means that the GB and the translators believe that the correct pronunciation of God’s name is “Yahveh.” But they do not tell this to the readers; one has to know Hebrew to understand it. However, Hebrew phonological rules applied to the theophoric names (names beginning with *y^hhō*) in the Hebrew Bible show that the rendering “Yahweh” is impossible.

117. A detailed discussion of all the points in A4 that I criticize is found in the chapter, “The Pronunciation of the Tetragram” in Furuli, *The Tetragram — Its History, Its Use in the New Testament, and Its Pronunciation*, 192–240.

118. *Ibid.*, pages 230–239.

In contrast, there is strong evidence in the Hebrew Bible and Akkadian cuneiform tablets with Jewish names that the original pronunciation of God's name was "yehowa."¹¹⁹ It is clear that the last letter "h" in the name *yhw* represents the long vowel *ā*, and that God's name has the three consonants *yhw*. These three consonants together do not have any meaning in Hebrew. We can compare this with the words *ʾēlohim* and *ʾēl*, both being translated as "god," and both being designations or titles referring to Jehovah. But *the letters* of these two words do not have a specific meaning. Similarly, we must conclude that *the letters yhw*, the name of God, is unique and elevated and has no particular meaning in the Hebrew language.

A4: *Therefore, the meaning of the name Jehovah is not limited to the related verb found at Exodus 3:14, which reads: "I Will Become What I Choose to Become" or, "I Will Prove to Be What I Will Prove to Be."*

The verb in Exodus 3:14 is *hāyā* (*hyh*), and this is the only Classical Hebrew verb with the meaning "be; become." As shown, there is no "related verb" in Hebrew with the meaning "be; become" written as *hāwā* (*hw*).

Basically, the verb *hāyā* describes a state. But because 1st person singular is used, it would be tautological to translate it as the state "I am." So the reference must be to the future, and therefore, the verb must refer to activity. The rendering, "I will be/become what I will be/become" would refer to a stationary condition. But the rendering, "I Will Prove to Be What I Will Prove to Be," would refer to activity. This is the fine rendering of NWT84. The rendering of NWT13 is "I Will Become What I Choose to Become." The problem with this rendering is that the word "Choose" is not found in the Hebrew text and has no basis in lexicon, grammar, or syntax. Therefore, this rendering is a paraphrase rather than a translation.

CONCLUSION

Fifteen years ago, I started to wonder about the direction that the GB was leading the organization. There was no longer a strong focus on the text of the Bible, and there was no encouragement for a personal study of this text. There were almost no studies of *the text* of the Bible in *The Watchtower*. But the articles basically discussed Christian attributes such as faith, godly

119. Ibid., pages 204–222.

devotion, how to be separate from the world, and how we can lead a balanced Christian life. All of these subjects are excellent and needed. But when only such issues are discussed, and there are very few studies of the text of the Bible, there is a clear imbalance, in my view.

Then something important happened in 2013: The revised *New World Translation* was released. And now, a pattern started to emerge. The present GB has a view of the Bible that is different from the view of the New World Bible Translation Committee in 1950 and the members of the first GB that was formed in 1971. The view is that the details and nuances of the text of the Bible are not important. This pattern became even clearer in 2015 when the article discussing types and antitypes appeared. Now it became clear that the GB, in addition to viewing nuances in the original text as unimportant, believed that great portions of the Hebrew Scriptures do not have any prophetic meaning—only moral lessons can be drawn from them. Now it became clearer to me why so few studies of the text of the Bible were published. I realized that the consequence of this view is that a great part of the text of the Hebrew Scriptures has no special meaning for Christians but is just “filling material.” That a great part of the text of the Hebrew Scriptures has no meaning for us also explains the strong weight on meditation at the expense of personal study. When the text has no meaning for us, it need not to be studied. But we can meditate on what the texts remind us of.

As a Witness who has learned the importance of coming as close as possible to the original text, and who has learned the importance of accurate knowledge, I was very much concerned with the new viewpoints and decisions of the GB. In addition to the effects of this new view of the Bible, I also witnessed several situations where decisions of non-biblical issues made by the GB caused harm to many Witnesses. I had no power to do anything with these situations. But I sent several letters to the headquarters pointing out errors in the literature.

I have always been loyal to the GB and the organization. And I have defended the organization in Norwegian radio and TV and in different writings. I have done this because I have believed, and still believe that this is the only true religion. But I have seen how the present GB in recent years has led the organization in the wrong direction, and, in fact, the members of the GB are destroying the organization from the inside! The climax for me was reached in 2019 when we got the new book for elders,

“Shepherd The Flock Of God”. It contains several human commandments that have no basis in the Bible. Because of these, tens of thousands have been disfellowshipped, and other tens of thousands will be disfellowshipped in the future if these human commandments are not removed. In this situation, I cannot be quiet anymore, and therefore I have written this book.

A COMPARISON OF THE TWO VIEWS OF THE BIBLE

The GB of 1972: All the nuances and subtleties of the original text of the Bible are important.

The GB of 2013: The details of the original text of the Bible are not important.

The GB of 1972: The Bible abounds with types (prophetic accounts) and antitypes.

The GB of 2015: Most of the accounts that previously were taken as prophetic types are not prophetic. They only remind the GB of different things.

The GB of 1972: Personal interactive study of the Bible is greatly encouraged.

The GB in the 21st century: Personal interactive study of the Bible is not necessary. This is the duty of the “slave.” But the reading of the Bible and meditation are encouraged.

APPENDIX

RECENT EXAMPLES OF WHAT THE MEMBERS OF THE GB HAVE BEEN REMINDED OF

What is the *nature* of the reminders that are presented as spiritual food at the proper time by the GB? I illustrate this by a discussion of Haggai 2:6,7, and I quote from NWT13:

⁶ “For this is what Jehovah of armies says, ‘Yet once more—in a little while—and I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land.’ ⁷ “‘And I will shake all the nations, and the precious things of all the nations will come in; and I will fill this house with glory,’ says Jehovah of armies.

That “the precious things of all the nations” refer to honesthearted humans who fill Jehovah’s spiritual temple has been the viewpoint of JW since World War II. But the issue is whether or not it is the shaking of all the nations that cause the precious things to “come in.”

There is nothing in the text of Haggai that can provide a definite answer to this question. After Haggai mentions the shaking of the nations in verse 7, the clause introducing “the precious things of all the nations” that “will come in” begins with the conjunction *waw* (“and”). The syntactical use of this conjunction in Hebrew is fluid, and so we cannot know whether there is a relationship between the shaking and the precious things.

The words of Haggai were directed to the people in his days, and they represented an encouragement to support the rebuilding of Jehovah’s temple in Jerusalem. And the “precious things” at that time evidently were the people who came to the temple to worship Jehovah. The writer of Hebrews quotes Haggai 2:6, 20-22 in Hebrews 12:26, 27 (NWT13) and applies the words to the future:

²⁶At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised: “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven.”²⁷ Now the expression “yet once more” indicates the removal of the things that are shaken, things that have been made, in order that the things not shaken may remain.

The comments of *The Watchtower* of September 2021, page 19, is:

Unlike the shaking mentioned at Haggai 2:7, this shaking will mean everlasting destruction for those who, like Pharaoh, refuse to acknowledge Jehovah’s right to rule.

This is a correct comment because the writer of Hebrews wrote under inspiration that the shaking of the nations refers to their destruction. As mentioned, in the first fulfillment in the days of Haggai, “the precious things of the nations” were people who came to worship Jehovah in his temple. Following this pattern, “the precious things” today may also be people who come to worship Jehovah in his spiritual temple.

But when do they “come in” (into the temple)? Because of the words in Hebrews 12:26, 27, the fulfillment in our time of the shaking of the nations is their destruction. Because the “precious things” will

“come in” after the shaking, the GB says that the shaking will include more than the destruction of the nations, namely, the preaching of the good news about the Kingdom, including strong messages of judgment before the destruction of the nations. So, they reason, the “precious things” will “come in” after this preaching and before the destruction of the nations.

This is a possible interpretation. But there is another possibility as well, which is described in Revelation chapter 7.9, 10. The great crowd is seen, and this great crowd “come out” of (survives) the great tribulation, according to verse 14. So, the great crowd is seen *after* the great tribulation and the destruction of the nations, and it stands before the throne, thus, worshipping Jehovah in his temple. The “precious things” in the fulfillment today *may* refer to the great crowd, and in that case, they will “come in” *after* the destruction of the nations, after their “shaking.” And because 7:9, 14, 15 specifically says that these come “out of all nations” in order to stand before Jehovah “in his temple,” at a time and setting after the destructive shaking of the nations at the great tribulation, one could argue that this more direct scriptural reference weighs in favor of this alternative explanation.

Please note that I am not suggesting that “the precious things” refer to the great crowd. But I point out that the only thing we know about the fulfillment today is that the “shaking of the nations” refers to their destruction. And there are no clues in the context that can tell us whether the “precious things” refer to “the many peoples” who stream to Jehovah’s temple according to Isaiah 4:2, 3 [which is the interpretation of the GB] or to the great crowd.

Either application is pure speculation, and this shows that what a text *reminds* the members of the GB of is nothing but guesswork. I will now illustrate this point with the other example from Haggai’s words, namely, the relationship between “the shaking” and that “the precious things “come in.” *The Watchtower* of May 15, 2006, page 31, says:

Through the prophet Haggai, Jehovah foretold: “I will rock all the nations, and the desirable things of all the nations must come in; and I will fill this house with glory.” (Haggai 2:7) Is the rocking “of all the nations” causing

“the desirable things” of the nations—honesthearted individuals—to embrace true worship? The answer is no.

But *The Watchtower* of September 2021, page 16, says;

The figurative shaking that Haggai foretold has a positive effect on some people. He tells us that as a result of the shaking, “the precious things [honesthearted people] of all the nations will come” to worship Jehovah. (Read Haggai 2:7-9.) Isaiah as well as Micah foretold similar developments that would occur “in the last days.”—Isa. 2:2-4, ftn.; Mic. 4:1, 2, ftn.

A footnote to this paragraph says:

This is an adjustment in understanding. At times we said that the drawing of honesthearted ones to Jehovah was not caused by the shaking of all the nations. See “Questions From Readers” in the May 15, 2006, issue of *The Watchtower*.

Now we approach the main point. *The Watchtowers* of 2006 and 2021 say opposite things, and the footnote in *The Watchtower* of 2021 says that the latest interpretation is “an adjustment in understanding.” There is not a clear basis for any of the understandings in Haggai’s words because the only thing that is certain is that the shaking of the nations refers to their destruction. So what is the basis for the different understandings? The basis is what the text of Haggai *reminds* the members of the GB of. In 2006, they *were reminded* that the shaking of the nations did not cause “the precious things of the nations” to “come in.” But in 2021, they *were reminded* of the opposite, that the shaking does cause “the precious things of the nations” to “come in.” And in both cases, what they *were reminded of* was presented as spiritual food coming from Jehovah at the proper time. But as in the first example above about the “many people” who “stream to Jehovah’s temple” versus “the great crowd,” whether or not “the shaking” is causing “the precious things” to “come in” is pure guesswork as well.

When the details of an antitype or the fulfillment of a prophecy is described, there will always be a subjective element that we can classify as “guesswork.” However, the different descriptions are seen in relation to the whole picture, and therefore, the subjective descriptions have some basis. This means that these descriptions can be evaluated by the readers in relation to the whole picture.

However, this is not the case in connection with *reminders*. These are purely subjective judgments in the minds of the members of the GB, and they are not described in relation to “the whole picture” or accompanied by supporting arguments, as we see in the two examples above. Rather, the GB expects the readers to accept the adjusted understanding as truth without their having to present any real scriptural evidence. In reality, the members of the GB say: “By the power and authority invested in us as the faithful and discreet slave, whatever we write is food at the proper time from Jehovah. So you must accept everything we write as truth just because we say so.”

MY BELOVED RELIGION

In the chapters of this book, I have shown that according to the Bible, there is only one true religion. I have also shown that the only religious group that fulfills the criteria of being the true religion is Jehovah's Witnesses. All the basic doctrines of the Witnesses, including those that are unique for them, are built on the Bible. The Witnesses believe that the Bible is God's inspired Word, and they preach the good news of the Kingdom worldwide. They do not participate in wars, and they are no part of this world.

However, the organization today is in key areas the very opposite of what it was in 1972 when the elder arrangement was introduced. And that is the reason why I have appealed for a big organizational change, just as big as the change that occurred in 1971 and 1972. Three areas are of particular concern for me, 1) the new view of the Bible, 2) that the members of the GB have given themselves all power, and their words and decisions cannot be questioned, and 3) that tens of thousands have been disfellowshipped because of human commandments without any basis in the Bible.

The basic problem with the new view of the Bible is that it undermines the very inspiration of the Bible. The view of the members of the New World Bible Translation Committee in 1950, which is seen in their Bible translation, was that every word in the Bible was inspired by God and that all the subtleties and nuances in the text were important. They also believed that every account was included in the text with a particular purpose, while the writers were borne along by holy spirit. (2 Peter 1:21, NWT84) This was also the view of the members of the first GB that was instituted in 1971.

The present members of the GB have a different view of the Bible. Not only do they reject the linguistic nuances as being important, but they also believe that the details in many accounts in the Bible are unimportant—only the broad picture is important. And further, they believe that a great number of accounts that in 1972 were viewed as prophetic are non-

prophetic. The consequence of this view is that the texts of a great number of chapters in the OT have no independent meaning for us today, but they are included to uphold the broad picture, which is the focus on God's attributes, and how we can worship Jehovah and lead good moral lives. This view undermines the very inspiration of the text because the GB does not accept that all the details in the accounts of the Bible are included for a particular purpose.

The new allegorical system of Bible interpretation also undermines the inspiration of the Bible. The texts of many Bible accounts are not analyzed, and their prophetic meanings are not explained. But what these accounts *remind* the members of the GB of is the focus. These *reminders*, which often are allegorical, are presented in *The Watchtower* as "food at the proper time." Therefore, we see that the *meaning* of the Bible texts is not presented but rather *the ideas in the minds* of the members of the GB. This undermines the inspiration of the Bible because these *reminders* are extra-biblical and contradict the view that the truth is only found in the Bible and not in the minds of people.

This also undermines the inspiration because the prophetic element is removed from a great number of accounts in the Hebrew Scriptures. It seems to me that since 2017 the prophetic element has systematically been removed from account after account. A clear example is the article, "An Attack Coming From the North" in *The Watchtower* of April 2020. The setting of the account of the locusts and the outpouring of the holy spirit in the book of Joel is the day of Jehovah, which refers to our time. But this is ignored, and neither the locusts nor the outpouring of the spirit has any prophetic meaning for our time, according to the article.¹²⁰

One power base of the GB is three verses in Matthew 24:45–47. I have shown that no persons have been appointed by God as a "faithful and discreet slave" to give spiritual food to other Christians. The other power base is that there was a governing body in the first century, and therefore there must be a governing body today, as well. I have demonstrated that these views are wrong. And therefore, the present GB has no legacy and should be dissolved. The problem, however, is that this is not accepted by the members of the GB nor by most Witnesses.

120. A detailed discussion of this article is found on pages 367-373.

Since the elder arrangement was implemented in 1972, the members of the GB have given themselves more and more power, until today they have all power in connection with the doctrines, the assets, and the money — their words and decisions cannot be questioned. A worldwide organization must have leaders to function effectively. But these leaders must not be lording it over the individual members. (1 Peter 5:3) But they should be serving the members, as was the case in the 20th century. (Matthew 23:10–12) Because no one can call the members of the GB to account, they have been able to lead the organization in the direction of their choice — they have formed the organization into their own image.

The present organizational structure, where the members of the GB believe that they have both the obligation and the right to be a government for Jehovah's Witnesses, has created great problems. Because of the GB's extreme view on higher education, tens of thousands of young Witnesses have been pressured not to pursue higher education. This has, for many of them, reduced their abilities to get decent jobs to care for themselves and their families. This will particularly be the case because of the global economic problems that are caused by the Corona-crisis. Persons with little education will have great difficulties to get jobs. In addition to forcing their personal views of higher education on the Witnesses, the members of the GB have created a series of disfellowshipping offenses that are not based on the Bible — The Christian Greek Scriptures lists 11 disfellowshipping offenses, and the GB have made up and invented 37 more disfellowshipping offenses. Because of these, hundreds of thousands of Witnesses have been disfellowshipped, and other hundreds of thousands will be disfellowshipped in the future if there is no change.

The quotations in the frame below show the differences between the organization in the middle of the 20th century and the organization in the 21st century. The former view was that no individual was appointed over Jehovah's Witnesses to be their teacher. The latter view is that the members of the GB function as a government over Jehovah's Witnesses with unlimited power. They also function as interpreters and teachers.

The Watchtower of 1946: The organization was not “*the divinely appointed Custodian and Interpreter of the Bible*” or “*the teacher of God's servants and witnesses.*”

The Watchtower of 1952: “[God does not] appoint an individual over them [his people]. No individual student of God’s Word reveals God’s will or interprets His Word.”

The Watchtower of 2009: “Jesus Christ has appointed the faithful and discreet slave “over all his belongings” . . . the facilities at the world headquarters of Jehovah’s Witnesses, at branch offices in various lands, and at Assembly Halls and Kingdom Halls worldwide. Included too is the work of Kingdom-preaching and disciple-making.”

The Watchtower of 2013: “In recent decades, that slave has been closely identified with the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses.”

During my 57 years as an elder, I have been trained to care for the “wounded sheep” and for those who are the low ones of the flock.¹²¹ Therefore, I cannot be quiet any longer when I see that so many of my fellow Witnesses are being treated in a bad way. That is also the reason why I have taken the unprecedented step of writing this book.

But how could it happen that the true religion has developed from a theocratic organization and into an autocratic one, where the decisions and the words of the leaders cannot be questioned?

At a district assembly many years ago, the following situation was presented: A couple with two teenage children, a boy and a girl, had seen a film on TV. The mother said: “It is as if I have seen the introduction to this film before.” The father answered: “You are right. A short time after we were married, we went to a movie theater to see a film. After a few minutes, we looked at each other and said, ‘Shall we leave? This is a bad film.’ And then we left. Today we have seen the whole film—together with our children.”

This situation illustrates how humans gradually can become influenced from the outside until their views of what is good and bad, right and wrong, have changed. It also illustrates that changes in an organization can occur gradually and unnoticed. For example, six steps were taken over a period of 10 years for the GB to acquire the power over all of the Kingdom Halls so they could sell a number of them and collect the money.

121. The elder arrangement started in 1972, 50 years ago. But I include my position as the congregation servant in the Molde congregation from 1963 and as a circuit servant from 1965 in my years as an elder.

It is very clear that the organization in 1972, when the elder arrangement was introduced, was not autocratic. It was not perfect, but it was theocratic! The local elders had the responsibility to recommend new elders, and these were appointed by the branch office. The circuit overseers had no role in recommending elders — today they are appointing the elders in the congregations. The situation in 1972 was a theocratic arrangement that resembled the arrangement in the first Christian congregations, as we see in the Christian Greek Scriptures. As I have shown in chapter 3, the congregations and their bodies of elders were quite independent of the GB, which now for the first time, was formed.¹²² During the 50 years since the elder arrangement, the organization has developed into an autocratic organization, where the GB has all power in connection with the doctrines, the assets, and the money, and the bodies of elders have very little power.

But why was this wrong development not stopped by someone? We can ask: How many Witnesses today can remember the introduction of the elder arrangement 50 years ago? And regarding the few who can remember this: How many have a clear understanding of what the organization was like in 1972? And if some are concerned about the situation today where all power rests with the GB, what can they do? Any opposition to the GB will not be accepted and will be punished by disfellowshipping.

Moreover, a great number of the present members of JW have become Witnesses during the 21st century when the big changes in the autocratic direction have occurred. When they become a part of the congregation, they are told that there are a governing body and a faithful and discreet slave that they must follow and obey. And children who grow up and take their stand are also told exactly the same. So, for all these, the hierarchical and dictatorial organization is normal. And most of them do not know that the organization structure today violates several Bible principles, that this structure is very different from the organization structure in 1972

122. The Governing Body of today consists of eight men who discuss different issues related to the organization and, as a group, make their decisions. There was no such arrangement before 1971. The word “governing body” was before 1971 used in a vague way and was connected with the Watchtower Society. It is clear that there was not a group of men who held regular meetings and made decisions before 1971. It was the president, N. H. Knorr, who made the organizational decisions, and the vice president, F. W. Franz, who directed Christian doctrine.

when the elder arrangement was introduced, and that several articles in *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* in the middle of the 20th century strongly condemn an organizational structure like the present one.

Even many who work at headquarters are afraid of making suggestions to, or to confront the GB. In 1995, I was asked to be an expert witness for the Norwegian High Court in two child custody cases. In connection with that, I got a lot of information and advice from the legal department in Brooklyn. A Norwegian lawyer, who was a Witness, visited the legal department to discuss child custody cases. He told me that the lawyers he spoke with wanted more articles in *The Watchtower* and *Awake!* showing the freedom of youngsters to choose their education and the freedom of children in other areas, that could be used in child custody cases. They had mentioned this to a GB member, but with no result. And they were afraid to approach the GB again. I also know by firsthand experience that several members of the headquarters' staff disagree with the standpoint of the GB in connection with higher education. But they are afraid to confront the GB. Some years ago, I sent a letter dealing with higher education, which included most of chapter 4 in this book, to the Writing Department. But I doubt that anyone dared to show this letter to one or more members of the GB. If the GB received the letter, they completely ignored the data presented in it. This is shown by their recent writings.

A mechanism for upholding the authority of the GB

One of the 46 disfellowshipping offenses mentioned in “*Shepherd the Flock of God*” is apostasy, and two of the definitions are:¹²³

Deliberately Spreading Teachings Contrary to Bible Truth:
(2 John 7, 9, 10) . . .

Causing divisions, Promoting sects: (Rom. 16:17, 18; Titus 3:10, 11). This would be deliberate action disrupting the unity of the congregation or undermining the confidence of the brothers in Jehovah’s arrangement. It may involve or lead to apostasy.—*it-2*, p. 886.

I will use my book as an example. It argues that JW have the only true religion and it defends all the basic doctrines of JW. But the book criticizes the fact that the GB has given themselves dictatorial powers, the crusade against higher education, disfellowshipping on the basis of

123. “*Shepherd The Flock Of God*,” 12.39.3–4.

human commandments, and the new view of the Bible. It is important to realize that what is criticized did not exist in 1971 when the first GB was formed—these are new inventions introduced by the present GB in the 21st century. Therefore, when I criticize the mentioned arrangements, I am in agreement with the members of the GB in 1971.

However, in one area I disagree both with the present GB and the GB in 1971: There has not existed a “faithful and discreet slave” during the presence of Jesus, and there was no governing body in the 1st century CE. However, in the 20th century, these two views were practiced in a theocratic way and not in a dictatorial way, as it is today. If anyone claims that the rejection of the existence of the slave and the governing body are “contrary to Bible truth,” I challenge them to demonstrate with words from the Bible that I am wrong and that my arguments represent apostasy.

The problem, however, is that the definitions of apostasy are self-serving because it is the GB who defines what “Jehovah’s arrangement” is. And the definition is that the GB serves as a government for JW with unlimited power. Thus, any opposition to the GB is per definition apostasy because it “is undermining the confidence of the brothers in Jehovah’s arrangement.”

The Governing Body requires total obedience from the Witnesses. If someone is not obedient, he will be disfellowshipped. This shows that the GB has dictatorial powers.

In spite of the fact that the GB has the upper hand, my conscience has driven me to write this book, and I leave the judgment to Jehovah.

We should not only ask how the development leading to an autocratic organization was possible. But we should also ask how the Almighty God could allow this, provided that JW are his people. Interestingly, there were also situations in the past where God’s people did not follow the lead of Jehovah. The nation of Israel was God’s people. But time and again, the kings led the nation in the wrong direction, and they violated God’s laws and principles. After the return from Babylon, many Jews did not follow the laws of Moses. And Nehemiah “reprimanded them and called down a curse on them and struck some of the men and pulled out their hair.” (Nehemiah 13:25, NWT13)

The Christian Greek Scriptures show that members of several Christian congregations in the first century CE violated some of God's laws. In the congregation in Corinth, there were divisions and dissensions (1 Corinthians 1:10–13), and there were false apostles who wanted a high position in the congregation. (2 Corinthians 11:13) The members of the congregation in Ephesus had left the love that they had at first. And they were told: "Remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first." (Revelation 2:4, 5, NWT13). Some members of the congregation of Pergamon were "adhering to the teaching of Balaam," and others were "adhering to the teaching of the sect of Nicolaus." And they were told to repent. (Revelation 2:14–16) The congregation of Thyatira tolerated "that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess," and who misled the congregation. (Revelation 2:20) The members of the congregation of Laodicea were lukewarm, and spiritually speaking, they were "miserable and pitiful and poor and blind and naked." (Revelation 3:16, 17, NWT13) And for some time, the Almighty God tolerated all these bad situations in the congregations.

I am not comparing the members of the present GB with any persons in the mentioned congregations. I am just showing that there were some in these congregations in the first century CE who did not follow God's laws and principles. Most of the things and practices that we see among Jehovah's Witnesses today are just and good, and there is a good spirit in the congregations. I believe that the members of the GB are sincere persons. But they have taken a position among the Witnesses that violates many Bible principles. They have become a government with all power. But no Christian should govern other Christians. And in their strong desire to keep the organization clean, they have made disfellowshipping commandments that have no basis in the Bible, and they have exerted strong pressure against those who want to pursue higher education. These things violate 1 Corinthians 4:6 (NWT13): "Do not go beyond the things that are written." So, change is necessary in order to uphold God's standards!

I realize that there may be a negative effect of this book: Those who are enemies of JW will use it to attack the organization. This is a strong reason against publishing this book. However, the truth should not be hidden for the sake of the reputation of the organization. James 4:17 (NWT13) says: "Therefore, if someone knows how to do what is right and yet does not

do it, it is a sin for him.” I know, as the details of this book show, that the GB, by their decisions, have caused great harm and have ruined the lives of tens of thousands of Witnesses. And I know that the new view of the Bible of the present GB contradicts the view of the GB in the 20th century and even questions the very inspiration of the Bible. Because of this knowledge, my conscience does not allow me to be quiet.

Moreover, I am one of the few persons who has the resources necessary to confront the GB. This is so because I have had responsible positions in the organization during my 59 years as a Witness, and therefore I have much inside information. I know what the theocratic organization was like in 1972 because I was one of those who implemented the elder arrangement in Norway. And I have seen how the organization has developed into the present autocratic organization. Also, I have the linguistic knowledge necessary to demonstrate that in several instances, particularly in connection with disfellowshipping offenses, the GB has misunderstood the Holy Scriptures and misused them. So, I have to follow the words of James 4:17.

My 59 years as a Witness has been a wonderful time, and I have met many wonderful people. I have never seen any hypocrisy among other Witnesses. But I have seen sincere persons who have worked hard to do the will of Jehovah. One of the persons with whom I studied the Bible, asked me one time: “What is the best evidence you can point to, showing that Jehovah’s Witnesses are led by the spirit of God?” After some consideration, I answered: “The best evidence is that so many imperfect persons with different personalities can work together in peace and unity with so few problems. This is evidence of the work of God’s spirit!” My wife and I have lots of friends all over the country and in other countries as well. And we feel that the community of Jehovah’s Witnesses is our home. We have never experienced anything bad in our lives as Witnesses, and I have no grudge against anyone, including the members of the Governing Body. So, I am not writing this book because of any negative feelings, nor as a form of revenge. But I have written this book on behalf of all the tens of thousands of my Brothers and Sisters who have been and who will be treated in a bad way because of the extreme viewpoints and decisions made by the members of the Governing Body. And I have written this book in order to fight for just principles inside my beloved religion of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

APPENDIX: THE THEOCRATIC ORGANIZATION

In 1972, the organization was theocratic, and it resembled the first Christian congregations. How can the present autocratic organization again become theocratic? I have the following suggestions:

THE ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

- 1) The Governing Body must be dissolved.
- 2) A Coordinating Group should be formed. Two or more members should have the following backgrounds:
 - a) experienced Writing Department members,
 - b) brothers knowing the Biblical languages,
 - c) brothers with traveling experience,
 - d) brothers who have served as missionaries,
 - e) Bethel brothers with a long experience,
 - f) brothers who are lawyers,
 - g) zealous young brothers, etc.
- 3) The existing Committees should be maintained with some adjustments. No brothers of the Coordinating Group should be members of the Committees, and brothers with professional skills in the working area of each Committee should be added. A new Committee with the name “The Bible Committee” should be formed.
- 4) Branch Committees should continue to exist with experienced brothers.
- 5) Each congregation should have a body of elders, who are chosen by the other elders in the congregation in cooperation with the circuit overseer.

THE AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

- 1) The Coordinating Group and the Committees have the same responsibility and power.
- 2) The Coordinating Group makes the “smaller” decisions, and functions as the Service Committee in a congregation in relation to the whole body of elders. Each Committee makes the “smaller” decisions inside their area of responsibility. When bigger decisions are necessary to make, all the members of the Coordinating Group and of the Committees make the decision

as one group. In some instances, all the Branch Committees may be asked about their opinion before the decision is made.

- 3) The Branch Committee has the responsibility for each country, including the preaching work, and the program for the meetings and the assemblies.
- 4) The body of elders has the responsibility for the congregation, and the body is relatively independent of the branch office and the circuit overseer, as was the case in 1972.

THE BIBLE COMMITTEE

- 1) The basic responsibility of this Committee is to make sure that there is a clear Scriptural basis for every rule and decision that is made.
- 2) The first task of this Committee would be to carefully consider all the disfellowshipping offenses that are listed in “*Shepherd The Flock Of God*” and delete those that have no Scriptural basis.
- 3) The second task would be to review all the rules the GB has given the branch offices dealing with issues that are not mentioned in the Bible.
- 4) The new view of the Bible that undermines the inspiration of the Bible must be discarded, and the important task of the Bible Committee is to make arrangements for interactive teaching and interactive learning.
 - a) New outlines for public talks resembling the outlines of the 1960s and 1970s should be made. Elders should be encouraged to make their own outlines.
 - b) A great part of the study articles in *The Watchtower* should include analyses of the text of the Bible after the pattern of the 1965-articles on the resurrection (see page 328). The branch offices should contribute articles for *The Watchtower*.
 - c) A powerful program for interactive learning should be launched. All should be encouraged to memorize scriptures and to be able to use the Bible to defend the faith. Material should be prepared both for those who want to do a deep Bible study and for those who want a simpler study.

The most important point is that the members of the Coordinating Group, the committees, the branch offices, and the bodies of elders in the

congregations are all equals—no group should dictate the other groups, as is the case today. Each group has different responsibilities in the worldwide organization, and each group should be independent of the other groups to the extent that this is possible.

The organization is theocratic because it is led from headquarters in the USA. The worldwide preaching must be directed, and literature and study programs must be made. This is done under the direction of the Coordinating Group in cooperation with all the other groups of elders to the extent that this is possible. The theocratic principle is also applied in connection with new elders. These are not voted in by the congregation members. But they are appointed on the basis of the cooperation between the body of elders in each congregation and the circuit overseer.

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TO THE READER WHO IS DISAPPOINTED WITH THE ORGANIZATION

Over the years, I have met several Witnesses who have been disappointed with the organization for different reasons. Some have been treated unjustly by other Witnesses, and others have disagreed with particular teachings or organization procedures. Recently, a number in different countries have reacted negatively to the GB's overruling of the consciences of the nurses in connection with blood transfusion. Because of hurt feelings, or of one or more of the mentioned problems, some have left their congregation.

As I have shown in chapter 1, there is strong evidence showing that Jehovah's Witnesses constitute the true religion, the people of God. If you have problems and are planning to leave, please consider if this is a wise course. I suggest that you constantly pray to Jehovah, seeking his guidance and that you study all the evidence showing that only the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses are based on the Bible—review all these teachings, one at a time.

When we look at Israel in the past, who were the people of God, we see that at different times there was a need to change something in order to come into line with Jehovah. And likewise with the Christian congregations in the first centuries. The letters of Paul and The Revelation show that in some congregations there was a need to return to the Christian Way in some respects. And we know that this was done. We have a similar situation today.

As for you who are disappointed because of something in your congregation or the organization, I plead with you not to leave Jehovah. Imperfect persons can cause you harm. But Jehovah is faithful, and he will never leave you if you do not leave him.

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