Abstract

“THE UNIQUE BELIEFS OF THE JEHOVAH’S WITNESSES: AN ANGLICAN PERSPECTIVE”

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Project under the direction of Professor Robert David Hughes, III

Among Christian faith groups, the people known as the Jehovah’s Witnesses, led by the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society, are a unique group that does not recognize the current or historical nature or beliefs of any other Christian or faith group. This project seeks to define the unique beliefs of the Witnesses and compare them to the beliefs of the mainstream Church, particularly the Anglican perspective as defined by Anglican authors, the Book of Common Prayer 1979, and various translations of Holy Scripture.

The Anglican standpoint is taken primarily from three systematic theology texts. *Introduction to Theology, 3rd Edition* by Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra was originally prepared for an introductory course in Christian theology at the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and is a summary of contemporary discussion of the Bible and Christian history.

*Christianity: An Introduction, 2nd Edition* by Alister E. McGrath presents a basic understanding of the beliefs of Christianity as an essential entry-level step to studying Scripture and in practicing the Christian faith.

*Classic Christianity* by Thomas C. Oden provides a consensus view of the Christian faith, examining ancient Christian tradition and bringing it to the contemporary Church, providing a synthesis of the whole of Christian thought.
This project does not attempt to discuss all aspects of Witness doctrine and practice, but is intended as an introduction to the core beliefs developed by the Watch Tower Society, and how those core beliefs shape the lives of the Witnesses.

Chapter 1, *The Identities of Jehovah God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit*, examines the anti-Trinitarian views of the Witnesses and the effect of that viewpoint on the Witnesses’ understanding of the identity of the three revelations of God.

Chapter 2, *A Theocratic Order not of this World*, discusses the separatism practiced by the Witnesses, their eschatological understanding of Scripture, and the class structure of the Organization.

Chapter 3, *Exclusive Knowledge from Jehovah God*, examines the Witnesses belief that no religious organization or faith structure was authorized by God from the time of the Apostles until Watch Tower founder, Charles T. Russell heard the call of Jehovah God to be the bearer of truth at the end of the, so called, Gentile Times. This chapter also offers insights into the door-to-door ministry of the Witnesses.

Chapter 4, *The Death of Jesus*, considers the Witnesses’ understanding of the Lord’s Supper, its meaning to them, their rejection of the Cross as a symbol of true faith, and the gift of grace.

Chapter 5, *The Sacraments*, discusses the Witnesses’ practice of memorializing the death of Jesus, their practice of Baptism and the judicial committee process employed by the Witnesses, including disfellowshipping.

The Conclusion, *Is Ecumenical Accord Possible?*, considers how the Witnesses’ separatism from the world and all other faith groups prevents them from joining forces
with the mainstream Church to do the work of Christ in working to end the marginalization of any individual.

*Please refer to the Glossary for the definition of Interfaith, a term that is unique to the Witnesses.
The Unique Beliefs of the Jehovah’s Witnesses: An Anglican Perspective

by

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Who are the people called Jehovah’s Witnesses and what do they believe? How do their beliefs and practices compare with those of historical and mainstream Christianity, and in particular, the Anglican perspective? Why are they so dedicated to the door-to-door ministry?

There is no seminary for Jehovah’s Witnesses. All of their doctrinal instruction and printed materials are created and published exclusively by the Governing Body of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society at Bethel Home in Brooklyn, New York, or at Watchtower Farms in Walkill, New York by a staff of volunteers and are distributed through the local Kingdom Halls. The Witnesses that serve as local congregational Elders, Ministerial Servants, Committee members and any staff are also volunteers. No collections are taken at any of their meetings or conventions, yet their Kingdom Halls, farms and printing facilities continue to grow and prosper.

Jehovah’s Witnesses live quietly, work hard, pay their taxes and look forward to a new world that has been cleansed of all unbelievers, that is, everyone not in good standing with the Watchtower Society and the Kingdom Hall, without exception.

Herein is a brief study of what the Witnesses believe, how these beliefs affect the lives of the Witnesses and their families, and how these compare to the wider Christian understanding of God, life, death, redemption, and eternal life, with an emphasis on the Anglican tradition. The Watch Tower beliefs are studied from their publications and version of the Bible, *The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*.

The Anglican standpoint is taken primarily from three systematic theology texts. *Introduction to Theology, 3rd Edition* by Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra was
originally prepared for an introductory course in Christian theology at the Episcopal Theological School in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and is a summary of contemporary discussion of the Bible and Christian history.

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*Classic Christianity* by Thomas C. Oden provides a consensus view of the Christian faith, examining ancient Christian tradition and bringing it to the contemporary Church, providing a synthesis of the whole of Christian thought. Thomas C. Oden is the retired Professor of Theology and Ethics at Drew University.

This project does not attempt to discuss all aspects of Witness doctrine and practice, but is an introduction to the core beliefs of the Watch Tower Society. The text includes two forms of notations. An Arabic number (1, 2, 3, etc.) refers to Footnotes on the page. A Roman numeral (i, ii, iii, etc.) refers to Endnotes.

The Reverend David L. Bridges+
INTRODUCTION – The People Called the Jehovah’s Witnesses

The Jehovah’s Witnesses were originally known as the International Bible Students, founded in 1872 by Charles Taze Russell (1852-1916), who was raised as a Congregationalist. Russell and his associates formed an independent bible study group and tract publishing company organized under the laws of the State of Pennsylvania. The International Bible Students produced and distributed tracts and leaflets to promote personal bible study and holiness.

On December 15, 1884, the society was incorporated as Zion’s Watch Tower Tract Society of Pennsylvania as a non-profit, non-stock corporation with Russell as president. The corporation was located in Allegheny, Pennsylvania. In its charter, written by Russell, the society’s purpose was stated as "the mental, moral and religious improvement of men and women, by teaching the Bible by means of the publication and distribution of Bibles, books, papers, pamphlets and other Bible literature, and by providing oral lectures free for the people.”¹ The charter provided for a board of seven directors, three of whom served as officers—a president, vice-president (initially William I. Mann) and secretary-treasurer (initially Maria Russell). The charter stipulated that the officers be chosen from the directors and be elected annually by ballot. Board members would hold office for life unless removed by a two-thirds vote by shareholders. Vacancies on the board resulting from death, resignation or removal would be filled by a majority vote of the remaining board members within 20 days; if such vacancies were not filled within 30 days an

appointment could be made by the president, with the appointment lasting only until the next annual corporation meeting, when vacancies would be filled by election.²

In 1868, Russell became disappointed in all churches, the creeds, and the bible. He recorded this story of what he considered to be his renewal of faith:

> Seemingly by accident, one evening I dropped into a dusty dingy hall in Allegheny, Pa., where I heard religious services were held, to see if the handful who met there had anything more sensible to offer than the creeds of the great churches. There, for the first time, I heard something of the view of the Second Adventists, the preacher being Mr. Jonas Wendell.³

Russell’s reference to the “creeds of the great churches” as being un-sensible, is a viewpoint that underlies the Witnesses’ understanding and treatment of other religious groups, and affects Watchtower teaching and practice. This viewpoint is understood by the Witnesses as justifying the separation of the Witnesses from mainstream Christian groups.

Russell is reported to have never taken claim to any special revelation or vision for his teachings and no special authority on his own behalf.⁴ He stated that he did not seek to found a new denomination, but instead intended merely to gather together those who were seeking the truth of God’s Word “during this harvest time.” He wrote that the “clear unfolding of truth” within his teachings was due to “the simple fact that God’s due time had come; and if I did not speak, and no other agent could be found, the very stones would cry out.” He described himself as “God’s mouthpiece” and an “ambassador of Christ”.⁵

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The formula first used by C.T. Russell to predict the second coming of Christ, based on the doctrine of Dispensationalism, was further developed by J.F. Rutherford and supposes that the end of the Gentile Times (Matthew 24:3-22) began in 1914, and was evidenced by the start of the First World War. The Watchtower Society has predicted numerous end times throughout its history, and this has often had negative emotional effects on the lives of the Witnesses.\(^6\)

Later in his career, Russell reportedly accepted without protest that many Bible Students, as the Jehovah’s Witnesses were formerly known, viewed him as the Faithful and Wise Servant of Matthew 24:45, and he was described by the Watchtower after his death as having been made “ruler of all the Lord’s goods.”\(^7\)

Russell was succeeded as Society president by Joseph Franklin “Judge” Rutherford in 1917, following a bitter struggle among the Governing Body about who should be president. Rutherford, who had been the corporation attorney and a part-time Civil Court Judge, wrestled his way to power and became the self-proclaimed theologian for the Society. No teaching in magazines or books was published unless it came from Rutherford himself.\(^8\)

Nathan Homer Knorr was the third President of the Society and served from 1942 to 1977. Knorr had been a successful door-to-door shoe salesman and it was under his direction that the Witnesses would train for door-to-door ministry and develop the

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terритори-style of field ministry. Knorr devised and perfected the training program and operational methods used to perform the widely successful and well-known door-to-door ministry, or Field Ministry, as it is known to the Witnesses. The training program is called the Ministry School and is accompanied by a monthly publication entitled, *The Kingdom Ministry*. The training program includes public talks and mock cold-call presentations, with critique from experienced elders. The goal is to prepare every Kingdom Publisher, as the Witnesses often refer to themselves, to be a highly-effective minister in all circumstances.

The fourth Society President was Frederick William Franz who served from 1977-1992. Franz studied Greek, Hebrew and Latin for two years at the University of Cincinnati with the intention of becoming a Presbyterian preacher. He was considered a leading contributor to the Society’s *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures*. None of the translators of the *NWT* are specifically named, to avoid the attaining of any acclaim for their work. Hence, the education and qualifications of the translators is not published.

Milton George Henschel served as the fifth President of the Society from 1992 to 2000. In a July, 1968 interview with the *Detroit Free Press*, Henschel was asked about the Watch Tower Society’s opposition to organ transplants in which he responded that “transplanting organs is really cannibalism”, a belief that was abandoned in 1980.

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The sixth and current Society President is Don Alden Adams. Adams was originally connected to the Episcopal Church until, at an early age, his mother became interested in the teachings of Jehovah’s Witnesses.\textsuperscript{12}

The doctrinal rule book of the Witnesses is entitled, \textit{Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry}. This 224-page book also contains the catechesis of Society teachings, entitled \textit{Questions for Those Desiring Baptism}.\textsuperscript{13} The introduction reads, in part:

[This book] is published for Jehovah’s Witnesses. It draws attention to our basic Scriptural responsibilities. By reading it you will get an overall view of how the Christian congregation operates today. Its counsel and direction will help us to remain at unity with our brothers everywhere, who are busily ‘engaged in the holy work of the good news of God.’ – \textit{Rom. 15:16}

In addition to preaching the good news of the Kingdom worldwide, our aim is to help those thousands of people newly associating with us. Many of them desire to meet the Scriptural requirements for becoming dedicated and baptized witnesses of Jehovah. They too need to become familiar with Jehovah’s organization and how to share the Kingdom good news with others.\textsuperscript{14}

The following pages will explore the core beliefs of the Witnesses and compare them to the widely-accepted beliefs of the Christian world view. The Bible for Jehovah’s Witnesses is \textit{The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (NWT)} and is the Watchtower Society’s version of the Hebrew and Greek texts of the 66-book Holy Bible. In many cases, this translation will be compared to the \textit{New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)} of the Bible.

It is important to note that the words, \textit{Witnesses, Society,} and \textit{Organization} are synonymous for the people called the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Each Witness is also referred

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\item Ibid., p. 4.
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to as a Publisher, and all Witnesses are Ministers. There is no paid clergy, but volunteer Elders and Ministerial Servants (known in Anglican and Catholic Christian traditions Priests as Deacons) lead the local congregations. The congregations are grouped in Circuits, with a Circuit Overseer (known in the Methodist tradition as District Superintendents), and Circuits are grouped in Districts (known in Anglican and Catholic traditions as Dioceses), with a District Overseer (Bishop). All District Overseers report directly to the Governing Body in New York. Each Governing Body member is also a member of the Anointed Remnant class.

Among the Publishers are: Regular Publishers (required to devote a minimum number of hours per month in the Field Ministry)\textsuperscript{15}, Temporary Pioneers (devoting a minimum of 60 hours per month in the Field Ministry), Regular Pioneers (devoting a minimum of 100 hours per month in the Field Ministry), Special Pioneers (devoting a minimum of 120 hours per month in the Field Ministry). Many Special Pioneers are also serving as Missionaries in foreign lands.

\textsuperscript{15} The required number of Field Ministry hours for a regular Publisher are calculated by dividing the total hours spent in Field Ministry by all Witnesses worldwide by the number of Publishers reporting the previous year. For more on this, refer to Chapter 3, Part 2, The Door-to-Door Ministry.
Chapter 1. The Identities of Jehovah God, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit

Part 1. Jehovah God and the non-Divine Jesus

A major key to understanding the doctrines of the Watchtower Society is understanding the significance placed on the name Jehovah, and the Society’s understanding of the identity of Jehovah as the Almighty God. This understanding interprets the Society’s teachings on the identity of Jesus Christ. Watch Tower Society literature is very clear about these identities, and this is a key factor in understanding the Witnesses’ beliefs. The translators of the New World Translation understand themselves to have been uniquely called to translate Holy Scripture for our day, and further that all other translations or versions are inaccurate.

The Foreword of the New World Translation reads, in part:

It is a very responsible thing to translate the Holy Scriptures from their original languages, Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek, into modern speech. Translating the Holy Scriptures means a rendering into another language the thoughts and sayings of the heavenly Author of this sacred library of sixty-six books, Jehovah God, which holy men of long ago put down in writing under inspiration for our benefit today.

That is a sobering thought. The translators who have a fear and love of the Divine Author of the Holy Scriptures feel especially a responsibility toward Him to transmit his thoughts and declarations as accurately as possible. They also feel a responsibility toward the searching readers of the modern translation who depend upon the inspired Word of the Most High God for their everlasting salvation. …

An effort was put forth to bring about even greater consistency in the renderings of the related parts of the Holy Scriptures, such as in harmonizing with the original Hebrew readings the reading of quotations made in the Christian Greek Scriptures. …

Note the above statement regarding *harmonizing* the Old and New Testament Scriptures. The translators have adjusted the Hebrew quotations in Greek Scripture to conform to their understanding of the meaning and application of these texts. After highlighting the years each portion of the *New World Translation* were completed (between 1960 and 2013), the *Publishers’ Forward* to the *NWT* continues to explain how the current edition was finalized, by combining the previous six volumes into one:

Since the one-volume edition of the Holy Scriptures was to contain no footnotes, many footnote readings that had appeared in the earlier translation in six distinct volumes were lifted and put in the main text of the one-volume edition. This does not mean that the earlier rendering that was now replaced was rejected. Rather, the purpose was to attain to closer conformity to the literal reading in the original languages. All this process has resulted in revisions in the main text of the translation. …

The above statement that the footnotes had been incorporated in the revised text of the New World Translation would seem to indicate that the text itself was modified to conform to the doctrinal understandings of the Society. There is no visible indication in the current text that any footnotes had been incorporated, and the text appears in standard chapter and verse format, with no footnotes.

The reader will notice that all teaching, questions and statements contained in Society literature are answered chiefly by referring to Scripture. In each case these references are to the New World Translation (*NWT*). Why does the Society believe the *NWT* is the only accurate translation of Holy Scripture? The New World Translation Committee explains in the 2013 revision, why the Society considers the *NWT* to be the most accurate translation of Holy Scripture:

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The vast majority of people who read the Bible do not understand the original languages and therefore must rely on a translation. What principles should guide how the Bible is translated, and how did these govern the rendering of the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures?

Some might conclude that a strict, word-for-word, interlinear-style translation would enable the reader to get closest to what was expressed in the original languages. However, that is not always the case. … A translator may be able to mirror the literal rendering of the original language in some passages, but this must be done very carefully.

Here are some examples of how word-for-word translation can be misunderstood:

- The Scriptures use the expressions “sleep” and “fall asleep” to refer both to physical sleep and the sleep of death. (Matthew 28:13; Acts 7:60) When these expressions are used in contexts that refer to death, Bible translators can use such wording as “fall asleep in death,” which helps the modern reader avoid confusion. – 1 Corinthians 7:39; 1 Thessalonians 4:13; 2 Peter 3:4.  

The New Revised Standard Version of the Bible does not leave the concept of physical death ambiguous, as evidenced by the noted Scriptural references above, examined in the NRSV:

1 Corinthians 7:39: “A wife is bound as long as her husband lives. But if the husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, only in the Lord.” (NRSV)

1 Thessalonians 4:13: “But we do not want you to be uniformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope.” (NRSV)

2 Peter 3:4: “and saying, ‘Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since our ancestors died, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation!’” (NRSV)

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For the Witnesses, the only authorized and accurate Scriptural and doctrinal reference materials are written and produced in factories owned and operated by the Watch Tower Society as the only true, authorized voice of Jehovah God for the world. This is important to remember as we examine the unique teachings of the Society, the Witnesses unparalleled devotion to the Field Ministry, and their astonishing growth. These factors are all considered by the Society to be signs of Jehovah God’s approval and blessing.

The key teaching of the Society by which all of the Witnesses thought and teaching is governed is the belief that Jesus Christ was the greatest man that ever lived, but in no way Divine. For the Witnesses, Jehovah God is the Almighty God, Jesus Christ is the son of God, and the Holy Spirit is the active force of God, but not God; the doctrine of the Trinity is adamantly opposed by the Society.

Watchtower publications are clear about the distinction between Almighty God Jehovah, and Jesus. The book *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry*, in chapter 2 entitled, *Benefiting from Theocratic Subjection*, encourages Witnesses to follow the example of subjection that Jesus demonstrated toward his father Jehovah:

By learning and acting upon the truth of God’s Word, we have come out from under Satan’s influence. As dedicated, baptized Witnesses, do we not accept Jehovah as the Sovereign of our life? Do we not agree with loyal King David who acknowledged Jehovah as ‘head over all’? (1 Chron. 29:11). Certainly! We humbly confess that ‘Jehovah is God. It is he that has made us, and not we ourselves. We are his people and the sheep of his pasturage.’ (Ps. 100:3). Our recognition of Jehovah’s greatness and the need for being totally submissive to him takes into consideration his worthiness and the reasons why he created all things. (Rev. 4:11). As ministers of the true God, we follow Jesus Christ who is a perfect example of subjection to God.

What did Jesus learn by the things he suffered while on earth? Obedience to God’s will even under adversity. (Heb. 5:8). Furthermore, Jesus did not do a single thing of his own initiative; he did not speak of his own originality nor did he seek his own glory. (John 5:19, 30; 6:38; 7:16-18). During his ministry he found delight in doing his Father’s will, even though this course brought opposition and
persecution. (John 15:20). Nonetheless, he showed subjection to God by ‘humbling himself’ even to the point of ‘death on a torture stake’. (Phil. 2:5-8). The outcome of his complete subjection was rewarding in many ways, resulting in everlasting salvation for mankind, exaltation and perfection for himself and glory to his Father.”

The reference to Jesus dying on a “torture stake” is unique to the New World Translation and is further discussed in Chapter 4, Part 2. The reader will find that the NWT translators inserted the name Jehovah at every instance where The Tetragrammaton (YHWH), or the title Lord appears in the traditional Hebrew text. Likewise, each reference to God in the Greek text is rendered as Jehovah. In Society teaching, Jehovah God is always superior to Jesus Christ. This is significant to note as the NWT also employs the title Lord, for Jesus, while claiming that YHWH and Jesus are not equal.

In the NWT, John 1:1 is translated as: “In [the] Beginning the Word was, and the Word was with God, and the Word was a god.” This translation reduces Jesus to less than Divine. The NWT continues: “This one was in [the] beginning with God. All things came into existence through him, and apart from him not even one thing came into being” (John 1:2-3, NWT). Although not Divine, all things came into being through the Word.

When arguing against the Trinity doctrine of the mainstream Christian tradition, the Witnesses claim that every translation or version other than the NWT is flawed in their rendering of John 1:1. Faithful Witnesses adopt the non-divine Jesus, and refer to God exclusively as Jehovah.

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The *New Living Translation* reads:

“In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God. He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him, and nothing was created except through him. The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone” (John 1:1-4, *NLT*).

The understanding of the mainstream Christian Church differs from the Witnesses’ in regard to the identities of *YHWH* and Jesus Christ:

[In Scripture] a specific name is being used to refer to God. This is the term “Lord,” which is the English term used to translate a cipher of four letter used to name God in this way. This group of four letters, often referred to as the “Tetragrammaton” (from the Greek words for “four” and “letters”), is sometimes represented as “Yahweh” or “Jehovah” in English versions of the Bible.  

In Greek Scripture, the title Lord is used similarly in reference to Jesus of Nazareth.

There are two main senses to this title in the New Testament. One is as a title of respect. It could be assumed that this was the context when Martha addressed Jesus as Lord as recorded at John 11:21. Another is a direct reference to the God of Abraham, as in the view of Alister McGrath:

The confession that “Jesus is Lord” (Romans 10:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3) was clearly regarded by Paul as a statement of the essential feature of the gospel. Christians are those who “call upon the name of the Lord” (Romans 10:13; 1 Corinthians 1:2).

When originally translating the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, the word *kyrios* was used to render the sacred name of God. The Hebrew Scriptures contain the Tetragrammaton 6,823 times, and the Greek *kyrios* (“Lord”) is used to translate it 6,156 times.

This Greek word thus came to be an accepted way of referring directly and specifically to the God who had revealed himself to Israel at Sinai, and who had entered into a covenant with his people on that occasion. Jews would not use this term to refer to anyone or anything else. To do so would be to imply that this person

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or thing was of divine status. The historian Josephus tells us that the Jews refused to call the Roman emperor *kyrios*, because they regarded this name as reserved for God alone.\textsuperscript{22}

The New Testament writers were themselves Jews and had no hesitation in using the sacred title, Lord (*kyrios*), when referring to Jesus, with all that this implied.\textsuperscript{23} The Greek text often takes a Hebrew text and directly applies it to the Lord Jesus. For example, compare Joel 2:32 with Acts 2:21, according to McGrath:

The passage in Joel refers to a coming period in the history of the people of God, in which the Spirit of God will be poured out upon all people (Joel 2:28). On this “great and dreadful day of the Lord” (that is, God) “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved” (Joel 2:31-32) – in other words, all who call upon the name of God will be saved.

This prophecy is alluded to in Peter’s great sermon on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:17-21), which ends with the declaration that “everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Acts 2:21). It is then made clear, in what follows, that the “Lord” in question is none other than “Jesus of Nazareth,” whom God has made “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). Peter declares that the resurrection has established that the same Jesus who was crucified has now been publicly declared by God to be the Messiah and Lord, with the right to equal status with God.\textsuperscript{24}

The *NWT* translators inserted the name, Jehovah, in verse 21 of Peter’s sermon: “And everyone who calls on the name of Jehovah will be saved” (Acts 2:21, *NWT*). The Society’s translators further separate Almighty God and Jesus by this translation of Acts 2:34: “Actually David did not ascend to the heavens, but he himself says, ‘Jehovah said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand…”’ (*NWT*) The *NWT* translators did not alter this part of Peter’s second address to the people, in referring to Jesus of Nazareth: “Furthermore, there is no salvation in anyone else, for there is not another name under heaven that has been


\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., p. 30.

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p. 31.
given among men by which we must get saved” (Acts 4:12, \textit{NWT}). This seems in contrast to the \textit{NWT} translation of Acts 2:21. The Witnesses refer to the expression “not another name \textit{under heaven}” as a differentiating factor between Jesus Christ and Jehovah God.

The Apostles of Jesus believed that we best understand God by looking at Jesus. “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (John 14:9b, \textit{NRSV}). Compare to the \textit{NWT}: “He that has seen me has seen the Father [also]” (John 14:9b, \textit{NWT}). John is leading us to define God by what we know of Jesus. Classic exegesis defines God’s character by looking at the character, teaching, life ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. To attempt to separate them in definite terms cannot be supported by any responsible translation or understanding of Christian Scripture.

Consider two translations of Matthew 1:23:

“Look! The virgin will become pregnant and will give birth to a son, and they will call his name Im-man’u-el”, which means, when translated, “With Us Is God.” (\textit{NWT})\textsuperscript{25}

“Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” (\textit{NRSV})\textsuperscript{26}

Consider the differences between these translations of Hebrews 1:3, 4:

“He is the reflection of [his] glory and the exact representation of his very being, and he sustains all things by the word of his power, and after he had made a purification for our sins he sat down on the right hand of his Majesty in lofty places. So he has become

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better than the angels, to the extent that he has inherited a name more excellent than theirs.” (NWT)

“He is the reflection of God’s glory and the exact imprint of God’s very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.” (NRSV)

It can be clearly seen that the NWT is unique in comparison to all major authorized translations or versions of Holy Scripture. Notice the NWT use of “[his]” above, compared to the NRSV “God” in the same reference. There is no footnote in the NWT to explain this, yet it appears in other NWT texts as well.

Thomas Oden, in reference to Augustine and Calvin on the subject of the Name above every other name, explains that the concept of sitting on a throne denotes royal or judiciary dignity. “Hence, to sit on the right hand of the Father means to participate fully in God’s majesty imparted through the exaltation (Matt. 24:30; 25:31; Luke 22:69; Heb. 1:3; Augustine, On the Creed 11). Christ governs in the kingdom of power, grace, and glory, reigns eternally, has dominion over all things (Calvin, Catech. Of the Church of Geneva; Ursinus, CHC:254-57)” 27

Did Jesus view himself as the Son of God? When questioned concerning the charges against him, the accusers asked Jesus if he was the Son of God. The key element in the question being his identity as the Son of God. (Mark 14:61) “To make sense of this question, a premise is required; someone – either he or another – had claimed that he was

the Son of God during his lifetime (Tertullian, *Ag. Praxeas* 16-18).  

The statements concerning Jesus as the Son of God do not conclusively define Jesus as less than Divine. Rather, the Scriptural record offers us Jesus doing the things only God can do; miraculously feeding the hungry, healing the sick, raising the dead and more.  

The Witnesses’ denial of the Divine Jesus as part of the Holy Trinity, and their insistence on not practicing interfaith, prevents them from sharing in fellowship with other Christian groups, or engaging in ecumenical efforts to improve communities and the world.  

**Part 2. The Impersonal Holy Spirit**  

The Watchtower Society presents the Holy Spirit as the *active force* of Jehovah God, yet not fully God. Although God’s active force is believed to do the work of God among humankind, it is not viewed as a part of God. This is demonstrated in the text of the New World Translation and in the Society’s literature. For example, notice the wording of this *NWT* text:  

“Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit” (Matt. 28:19 *NWT*).  

The lowercase *holy spirit* in the *NWT* further points to the Society’s teaching that the Trinity is a false doctrine. Anti-Trinity teaching is a key element of what makes the Witnesses’ beliefs unique, and more definitely separates them from mainstream Christianity. In the *Questions for Those Desiring to be Baptized*, the Society explains:  

**1. What is the holy spirit and what has it accomplished as indicated by the following Bible texts?**  

God’s active force was moving to and fro over the surface of the waters. – Gen. 1:2; compare Psalm 33:6 and 104:30. [NWT]  

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The spirit of Jehovah it was that spoke to me, and his word was upon my tongue. – 2 Sam. 23:2; compare 2 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Peter 1:20, 21. [NWT]

But if it is by means of God’s spirit that I expel the demons, the kingdom of God has really overtaken you. – Matt. 12:28 [NWT]

They all became filled with the holy spirit and started to speak with different tongues, just as the spirit was granting them to make utterance. – Acts 2:4.

Additional references: Isaiah 61:1, 2; Acts 1:8; Revelation 1:10 [NWT]

The use of lowercase references to the holy spirit is important to note. For the Witnesses, the holy spirit is not a person or actual entity, but the active force of God. The result of this is to clearly define and separate the Witnesses from the historic church beginning with Russell’s dislike of the Creeds of the major Christian churches. The Society renders John 14:16, 17 as: “I will request the Father and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, the spirit of the truth, which the world cannot receive, because it neither beholds it nor knows it. You know it, because it remains with you and is in you.” (NWT) Notice the references to the Holy Spirit as it, further emphasizing the belief that the Holy Spirit is not an entity of itself, nor a Divine person of God.

Compare the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV): “And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, because he abides with you, and he will be in you.” (John 14:16, 17 NRSV) In this instance, notice the personal nature of the Holy Spirit as him/he, denoting personal identity.

The Anglican tradition, and other mainstream Christian groups have realized that the use of gender-specific language in reference to God can be harmful to a healthy...
understanding of God and the human self, and has led to abuses of power perpetrated by humans against one another.

The *New World Concordance*, beginning on page 1452 of the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, under the heading *Spirit, Spiritism*, and the subheading *What the holy spirit is*, these definitions are offered:

- God’s active force, not a person (Ac 2:2, 3, 33; Joh 14:17)
- Used in Creation, inspiration of the Bible, etc. (Ge 1:2; Eze 11:5)
- Begets, anoints, Christ’s body members (Joh 3:5-8; 2Cor 1:21, 22)
- Empowers, leads God’s people today (Ga 5:16, 18)

In the first case above, Acts 2:4 is omitted. This is the verse that goes on to detail one of the gifts imparted to the disciples when the promised Holy Spirit was given to them on that Day of Pentecost 33 C.E. “All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.” (Acts 2:4, *NRSV*) It is also significant to note the differences in the basic translation of Acts 2:33 between the *NWT* and the *NRSV*:

> “Therefore because he was exalted to the right hand of God and received the promised holy spirit from the Father, he has poured out this which you see and hear.”

(*NWT*)

> “Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear.”

(*NRSV*)

Also notice the differences in the *NWT* and *NRSV* of Galatians 5:16, 18: “But I say, Keep walking by spirit and you will carry out no fleshly desire at all. … Furthermore, if

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you are being led by spirit, you are not under law.” (Galatians 5: 16, 18 NWT). Note the statement, “you will carry out no fleshly desire at all.” This is significant to remember when we consider the practice of disfellowshipping in Chapter 5, Part 3.

“Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. … But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law.” (Galatians 5: 16, 18 NRSV) The use of the phrase, “do not gratify the desires of the flesh” is a more supportive translation, encouraging the individual to make healthy choices for themselves and other persons, doing so with the assistance of the Holy Spirit.

Although the work of the holy spirit according to the Witnesses appears on the surface to be consistent with the mainstream Christian world view, the Witnesses’ view is clearly against any understanding of the Holy Spirit as fully God. The Society points out, and correctly so, that the Trinity doctrine does not specifically appear in Scripture. However, the mainstream Christian world view of God as Trinity developed over time as the result of sustained engagement with the biblical witness:

The Doctrine of the Trinity can be regarded as the outcome of a process of prolonged and critical reflection on the pattern of divine activity revealed in Scripture, and continued in Christian experience. This is not to say that Scripture contains a doctrine of Trinity; rather, Scripture bears witness to a God who demands to be understood in a Trinitarian manner.

The ultimate grounds of the doctrine of the Trinity are not to be sought exclusively in these two verses [Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14]. Rather, the foundations of the doctrine are to be identified in the pattern of divine activity to which the New Testament bears witness. The Father is revealed in Christ through the Spirit. There is the closest of connections between the Father, Son, and Spirit in the New Testament writings. Time after time, New Testament passages link together these three elements as part of a greater whole. The totality of God’s saving presence and power can only, it would seem, be expressed by involving all three elements (for example, see 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 2:20-22; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; Titus 3:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2).31

The idea of one God manifested in three persons is, to many, the most confusing of all Christian doctrine. Perhaps we can better understand Trinity by seeking a deeper understanding of Baptism. The command at Matthew 28:19 forces us to question what Baptism in the triune name means. Premature Trinitarian thinking assumes the doctrine to mean worshiping three gods, commonly known as tritheism, and this thought pattern has been rejected by classical Christian writers.32

The Society points to the Hebrew Scriptures, as they have interpreted them, as the basis for understanding God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Does the Old Testament testify to the tri-unity of God? The God attested to in the Old Testament, or Hebrew Scriptures, is one God, a unity and not a plurality. However, the God of the Old Testament is more than a simple unity. Almighty God (YHWH) is a complex unity.

All the anthropomorphisms of the Old Testament interpret the unity of Yahweh on the analogy of the unity of the human self. Furthermore, certain divine attributes or powers, such as Spirit, Word, and Wisdom, are distinguished and tend to be personalized and hypostatized. These terms refer to extensions of God’s personal presence and powerful activity in relation to the world. They are not systematically related in the Old Testament, and they overlap in function. But they point to a differentiation in the Godhead that is to some extent analogous to the New Testament differentiation among the terms Father, Son, and Spirit. In the New Testament, the Old Testament terms Word and Wisdom are applied to Christ, and Old Testament texts concerning the Spirit of God are applied to the Holy Spirit. In other words, the New Testament authors were able to understand the relation of the Son and the Spirit to the Father in a way roughly analogous to how the Old Testament authors understood the relation of Word, Spirit, and Wisdom to Yahweh.33


This is not to say that the Old Testament contains an implicit doctrine of the Trinity that was brought out by the New Testament writers, but rather that the Old Testament refers to a living God. This is mainly expressed by means of differentiation, what Owen Thomas and Ellen Wondra, referring to Tillich, call the semi-personalized and semi-hypostatized attributes or powers of God.

Tillich has suggested that understanding a living reality requires perception of its differentiation, at least between power and dynamics, on the one hand, and meaning and form on the other.\textsuperscript{34} The concept of \textit{person} in late twentieth-century Trinitarian theology views persons as both differentiated in themselves and from others, while at the same time inseparably connected with themselves and others. In other words, persons are differentiated unities.

God is self-revealing in the New Testament as triune or threefold, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The God revealed in Christ by the Spirit is understood to be the same God revealed in the history of Israel. Furthermore, the God attested in the New Testament is a unity. There is no evidence in the New Testament that the unity of God is questioned or in doubt. The divine unity is assumed and affirmed (1 Cor. 8:4f; Eph. 4:4f; Mark 12:29).\textsuperscript{35}

Another way to summarize the doctrine of the Trinity is to note that the early Christians had three types of experience with God, based on three historical revelations of God. As Jews they knew God as heavenly Father. As disciples they knew God as revealed in Jesus’ life, ministry, death, and resurrection. As Apostles they knew God as the gift and presence of the Holy Spirit to guide and protect them in their ministries. As theologians through the centuries have sought to interpret these three types of experiences, the doctrine


\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., pp. 68-69.
of the Trinity emerged as the best approach to understanding, as best we are able, the identity and work of God in three revelations; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God.

In the Jewish experience, God is known as the Divine Word, Spirit, Wisdom, Power, and Glory; not simply as Father (Abba = Provider). For Christians, the God revealed to Israel was more than simply Father. In the experience of those who knew Jesus, He was more than simply God’s Son. The life and ministry of Jesus is depicted as a manifestation of the power of the Holy Spirit. The conception, baptism, and ministry of Jesus are all marked by acts of the Holy Spirit. In the ongoing experience of God, we experience the continuing presence of God at work in the world.\textsuperscript{36}

The nucleus of triune teaching is to learn how to affirm simultaneously three aspects; the equality and unity and distinguishability of Father, Son, and Spirit in our encounter with the one God. Physical objects have three dimensions – length, breadth, and height. They are distinguishable, but inseparable, unified in a single object, yet three-dimensional. Our experience of the physical world always has three aspects – space, time, and matter. These are unified in the being of any physical object, yet clearly distinguishable. The seeming paradox of three in one is familiar to the human experience of physical reality (Augustine, \textit{Trin.} 8.10; Tho. Aq., \textit{ST} 1 Q12, 13).\textsuperscript{37}

Common human perception requires a threefold unity as a way of understanding all earthly things; the mind, objects, and the act of perceiving.\textsuperscript{38} The unity of the human self consists of memory, understanding, and willing. Love requires a lover, one who is loved, and the love that unites them, yet all of these refer to the single reality of love. In this way,


\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., p. 108. Referring to Augustine, \textit{Trin.} 9.1-12.
threefold patterns are how humans understand God and the world; as unity, equality, and distinguisability.\textsuperscript{39}

We understand human personhood through the self-disclosure of God. According to J.V. Langmead Casserley: “It is significant that the conception of divine personality thus preceded in time the conception of human personality. Human thought has an inveterate tendency always to conceive man in God’s image.”\textsuperscript{40}

Owen Thomas and Ellen Wondra use the analogy of human relations to clarify the idea of God’s revelation. They explain that one person comes to know another person by what is revealed to the other over the course of the relationship. The persons experience the words and actions of the other; their hopes, fears, attitudes, plans, and convictions; ultimately, their character. The individuals are then known only by what is revealed. If the personal revelation, for example the verbal exchange, is not consistent with the evidence, that is, the actions, trust is lost. On the other hand, if the revelation is consistent on all levels, the persons can be said to know one another. That knowing then determines the relationship from then on.\textsuperscript{41}

The revelation of God to humans is known only in the three forms demonstrated in Holy Scripture, and understood in human terms as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The natural sciences do not by themselves give authority to the Scriptural testimony. Likewise, Holy Scripture does not give authoritative knowledge to geology, astronomy, biology,


\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., p. 24.
anthropology, psychology, or sociology. The revelation of God cannot be measured in these terms.

There are qualitative differences, furthermore, between knowledge received in revelation and in human personal self-disclosure, and the knowledge received in other ways, especially scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge depends on the initiative of the (logical) object of knowledge, God. Scientific knowledge generally requires disinterestedness and detachment from personal concerns (often called objectivity), whereas revelation involves engagement and personal response. In scientific knowledge we grasp what we know, but in revelation, God grasps us as both our Lord and our savior. Scientific knowledge adds to my store of knowledge about the world. Knowledge through revelation changes and reframes my knowledge. Ordinary knowledge by itself does not create community and may isolate, but the aim of knowledge through revelation is to create community with God and neighbor.42

The resistance to understanding God revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons yet one God, helps prevent the Witnesses from engaging in ecumenical efforts with the mainstream Christian community.

Chapter 2. A Theocratic Order not of this World

Part 1. Government by God, not Humans

The Jehovah’s Witnesses refer to themselves as Christians living under Theocratic Law (God Rule) as opposed to human rule. For them, the Theocratic Government of Jehovah God is already present in the world, governed in heaven by Jesus, led on earth by the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses, and comprised of the Watchtower Society and all Jehovah’s Witnesses worldwide. As such, subjection to the Society, also referred to as the Organization, is mandatory. The guidebook, Organized To Accomplish Our Ministry, explains:

Within the Christian congregation, subjection to God is reflected by obedience to his Word in all that we say and do. This includes our ministry, meeting attendance and participation, relationship with elders and cooperation with organizational arrangements. Yes, it takes in our conversation, attitude and conduct. Subsequent chapters in this publication will help you to become better acquainted with the Bible-based principles and rules that all in “God’s household” are exhorted to observe. – 1 Tim. 3:15.

Theocratic subjection affects all aspects of our life. It benefits us now so that we are organized to accomplish our ministry fully. By faith we see the day when all obedient mankind will be brought into subjection to Jehovah God. This will be accomplished through the good offices of Christ Jesus. (Heb. 2:7, 8; 1 Cor. 15:27, 28) It is essential that we recognize his role in God’s arrangement, since being submissive to Christ is a part of our being in subjection to God. 43

When a Witness is asked if they want to go to heaven, they will reply, no. Their reward is to live forever on a paradise earth, as was originally intended for Adam and Eve and their descendants. According to Watchtower Society teaching, all unbelievers will be destroyed at the Great Day of Armageddon, and the perfect Theocratic Government of Jehovah God will take total control of the entire earth, as that control is dispensed by the

Governing Body of God’s Kingdom on Earth, the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society.

The Society emphasizes the wickedness of the world, demands true believers to be no part of the world, and reassures readers and interested listeners that God will end all suffering worldwide by ridding the earth of war, hunger, sickness, injustice, and all wicked people.

God will fulfill his promises through the second most powerful person in the universe – the resurrected Jesus Christ. The time is coming when Jesus will rule unopposed as King over the entire earth. Mankind will no longer be governed by human beings, presidents, or politicians. Instead, they will be ruled by one King and one government – the Kingdom of God.

That Kingdom will do away with every human government … Peoples of all the earth will be united under one righteous government – God’s Kingdom.

… Under the benevolent rulership of the Kingdom, people will progress to perfection. The result? Jehovah “will actually swallow up death forever, and the Sovereign Lord Jehovah will certainly wipe the tears from all faces.” – Isaiah 25:8.

Do you, like many people, fear that corruption is inevitable and will never be completely eliminated? If so, that fear is understandable. Throughout history, humans have tried every conceivable form of government. Yet, they have never succeeded in permanently eliminating corruption. Is there any hope that a time will come when all people will deal honestly with one another?

Happily, the Bible’s answer is yes! It tells us that God will soon take action to rid our earth of corruption. How will he do so? By means of his Kingdom, a heavenly government that will completely transform our earth.

Notice the emphasis on eternal life on earth as opposed to a heavenly hope. The Witnesses’ eschatological hermeneutic is grounded in the belief that the earth will be cleansed of all wickedness on the day of Armageddon, and the only human survivors will be those who are in full submission to Jehovah God and his earthly Organization, the


Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, and the Witnesses. Those persons, along with resurrected faithful Witnesses, would then be the only human inhabitants of the earth forever. There is a separate class of Witnesses known as the Anointed Remnant that have a heavenly hope, and that calling is only for a limited number of persons, specifically 144,000. This is another core teaching of the Witnesses and is discussed in detail in Parts 3 and 4 below.

Although the Society proclaims all human governments to be against the True God, and that God’s people are to have nothing to do with the governments of this old system, the Organization book, under the heading Caring for the Poor, advises brothers and sisters in the Truth to assist one another in times of need, but also includes the direction, “At times material assistance is available through governmental or social agencies, and so relatives or others may show kindness in helping the needy one to make proper requests for such assistance.”

The Witnesses profess to be no part of the world and take no part in governmental matters or general society. The Witnesses do not vote in governmental elections. The Society also prohibits a Witness from taking or continuing employment as a police officer, or serving in any form of military service.

For the Witnesses, the end of wicked human systems and all unbelievers, is not the last battle to be fought against evil. The Society teaches the words of Revelation 20, as well as all Scripture, as literal prophecy. In the New World Translation, in the Bible Topics For Discussion section, under the heading Kingdom, the Society presents part of its

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teaching of the Thousand Year Reign of Jesus on earth, citing Revelation 21:2-4, and 20:6, in that order.\textsuperscript{47}

I saw also the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God and prepared as a bride for her husband. With that I heard a loud voice from the throne say: “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 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. 21:2-4 NWT)

Happy and holy is anyone having part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no authority, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will rule as kings with him for the thousand years. (Rev. 20:6 NWT)

The Society explains what they believe will happen after one thousand years of human life on earth without any wicked influence:\textsuperscript{48}

Now as soon as the thousand years have ended, Satan will be let loose out of his prison, and he will go out to mislead those nations in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Ma’gog, to gather them together for the war. (Rev. 20:7, 8a NWT)

The above excerpt gives rise to an interesting question: If all wickedness has been destroyed and the earth has been restored to a paradise by the faithful Other Sheep who have worked for one thousand years as gardeners, under the one perfect Theocratic Government of Jehovah, led by Jesus Christ, how could there be other “nations in the four corners of the earth”? If the words of Revelation are to be understood literally, there would be another great war on earth one thousand years after the Great Day of Jehovah at Armageddon.\textsuperscript{49}


\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., p. 1463.

\textsuperscript{49} Watch Tower Committee, \textit{The Watchtower Magazine; Introduction} (New York: Watch Tower). This teaching appears in many editions, for examples see issues of 12/1/2009, p. 4; 10/1/2012, p. 7.
Widely accepted mainstream Christian views present varied eschatological understandings. In some cases, classical Christian theology supports the idea of perfect human life on earth after a holy cleansing. Others support an end-of-the-world expectation. “Human life attains its final end not in this life but in a future as yet unpossessed. The truest, fullest blessedness does not appear in temporal life, but in eternal life to come (Titus 1:2; Ambrose, *Of the Christian Faith* 5.17.215-16; 3:7; Baxter, *The Saints Eternal Rest*).\(^{50}\)

Thomas Oden offers this concept in the light of Didymus the Blind:

The life that one receives in creation is made mortal through the consequences of sin. The person is deprived of life in time by bodily death. The body in this temporal life is given as a provisional housing for the person through creation (2 Cor. 5:1-5). Congruently but differently: the life that one receives by resurrection is made immortal through the consequences of grace. In the Genesis account soul was created after body, following the generation of the body, adapting itself to the body. In the end, the process is reversed: the body becomes adapted to the spirit, following after the soul, as the glorified body (1 Cor. 15:42; Didymus the Blind, *Comm. On Paul*, 15:10).\(^{51}\)

On the matter of the *thousand years* of Revelation chapter 20, Oden relates that Thomas Aquinas believed the thousand years referred to the whole time of the Church in which the martyrs and the saints reign with Christ, both now on earth and for eternity in heaven; the thousand years meaning perfection, “since it is the cube whose root is ten, which also usually signifies perfection”. B.B. Warfield, a Protestant theologian believed that the thousand years was symbolic of the condition of the bliss of the redeemed in heaven, and must not be understood as a literal earthly reign. Warfield taught the “sacred number seven in combination with the equally sacred number three forms the number of


\(^{51}\) Ibid., p. 789.
holy perfection, ten, and when this ten is cubed into a thousand the seer has said all he could say to convey to our minds the idea of absolute completeness.”

A righteous government over the earth would not necessarily require the destruction of anyone that does not adhere to a specific faith group or restriction to an ideal. The work of the Holy Spirit is to draw all flesh to God through the ministry and example of Jesus Christ as lived-out in the life of the Church. One purpose of the ministry of Jesus was to teach humans how to live in peaceful community, where no individual lacked anything necessary for healthy, peaceful living. It is the command of God to the one holy catholic and apostolic Church to spread the good news of peace and redemption to the entire world, while working for justice today.

**Part 2. Armageddon**

For the Witnesses, all biblical prophesies are related to the end times (*eschaton*), especially Matthew, Chapter 24, culminating in verse 14: “And 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” (*NWT*). The final fulfillment of these prophesies will occur on the Great Day of Jehovah, the Day of Armageddon. “And they gathered them together to the place that is called in Hebrew Har-Ma-ged’on” (Rev. 16:16, *NWT*).

The Battle of Armageddon, according to the Witnesses, will rid the earth of all human governments, and all wickedness, by destroying all people that refuse to accept Jehovah as God, and the Watch Tower Society as the Faithful and Discreet Slave. Following that final holy war, God’s chosen people, the people called Jehovah’s Witnesses,

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will work to transform the earth into the paradise that God intended it to be from the beginning in the Garden of Eden:

The purpose of this magazine, *The Watchtower*, is to honor Jehovah God, the Supreme Ruler of the universe. Just as watchtowers in ancient times enabled a person to observe developments from afar, so this magazine shows us the significance of world events in the light of Bible prophecies. It comforts people with the good news that God’s Kingdom, which is a real government in heaven, will soon bring an end to all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God’s Kingdom. This magazine has been published by Jehovah’s Witnesses continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.\(^53\)

The Society teaches that any parent that fails to rein-in their child by teaching them the *Truth* and practicing it themselves will suffer bloodguilt from Jehovah if that child fails to survive Armageddon. The disapproval of the child results in the disapproval of the parent(s). Likewise, if a parent becomes disapproved, their minor children may be destroyed at Armageddon because the disapproval of the parents results in the automatic disapproval of their children.

According to the Society, Jesus and the angels have been separating people in preparation for the final war of Armageddon:

… a tremendous witness has been given, resulting in a dividing of the people. During this period Jesus Christ, along with his holy angels, has been separating lovers of righteousness from those who are indifferent to, or who actively oppose, the truth. This separating, or dividing, work was foretold in Jesus’ illustration of the sheep and the goats. (Matt. 25:31-46) We are now nearing the end of the present ungodly world. (2 Pet. 3:7, 11, 12) The ministry has become more urgent than ever before. (John 9:4) This calls for faithful Christians to be filled with zeal. They cannot loiter at their God-assigned work or be indifferent to its being fully accomplished. (Rom. 12:11) This is no time for independent thinking or conflicting actions on their part.\(^54\)

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The strict separationism beliefs and practices of the Witnesses prevent any productive dialog with other faith groups, thereby restricting their ability to see any good in the world or in other ways of understanding God and Holy Scripture. They view themselves as the only human instrument chosen by God to assist Jesus and his angels in the sorting of humans; the good ones are blessed with life on a paradise earth forever and the wicked ones are destroyed. The wicked ones, that is, all un-believers, are marked for eternal destruction at God’s war of Armageddon. (Rev. 11:15-18, NWT)

The term Armageddon is not often used in the language of mainstream Anglican or world-wide Christianity, where End Time studies or Eschatology, are common terms. Mainstream Christian eschatological views range from total destruction of the earth to cleansing of the earth, and more. As the Witnesses wait for a completing-event to fulfill all of Scriptural prophecy, the teachings of the worldwide Church have evolved in relation to the realities of life two thousand years after Jesus’ earthly life.

Thomas Oden explains: “The great lengths and strands of providence await a completing event. If so it is foolish to speak of suffering or social justice without reference to the future of God’s mercy and justice. No small amount of Christian ethical teaching is directly tied to the promise of the justice of God in the end of history. There is enduring moral relevance for the here and now in the inquiry into the future.”55

The dominant mainstream Christian belief in relation to the end of human life is the heavenly hope of believers. The traditional meaning of heaven is generally understood in reference to dwelling in the presence of God forever (See 2 Cor. 5:1-9 NRSV). Alister McGrath explains that the term heaven is not to be understood graphically or spatially, as

in a country or region of the world. The sense of the word is relational, as in a state-of-dwelling with God. In this understanding, a radical transformation of all things takes place. In some interpretations, this brings about a new order of things and reverses the devastating effects of sin on humankind. McGrath offers the understanding that, “The present age will be transformed and renewed, just as a seed is transformed utterly in becoming a living plant.”

The widely-differing exegetical eschatologies of mainstream Christianity may leave us with the question: Why does God’s revelation leave so many details unclear, especially in such an important matter as eternity?

There is providential reason why finite reasoning is left walking by faith rather than by sight: “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter” (Prov. 25:2). The study of the future remains, according to God’s wisdom, a matter of the simple meekness of faith, not the pretense of convoluted knowledge. The study of the end time is a probationary study in which the limits of all human knowing are on trial. The prototypical sin of humanity was the attempt to penetrate forbidden knowledge (Gen. 2:17). Knowledge of the future retains this prohibition as long as human consciousness is enmeshed in time.

The key: The reasoning of the faithful about the future arises out of personal meeting with the risen Lord. The vision of eternal life is an expression of sharing in Christ’s own life, death, resurrection, and exaltation.

Perhaps the cornerstone of this matter is the awareness of death that inspires a deepening desire to understand the meaning and purpose of life. If our focus is centered on future fulfillment, little room is left for present action. Human life is so finite that understanding it becomes vital to our balanced use of the limited time we have.

The end of human life is a fact we cannot escape. The question for many remains: What happens when we die? Apart from end time theologies, such as the Great War of

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Armageddon, the questions surrounding the presence and nature of the human soul, and what happens to the soul when the body dies are of paramount importance to Christian believers. The need for answers has given rise to a multitude of varying exegetical understandings. One Christian world view is presented by Thomas Oden:

It is common in the history of revelation for certain teachings to be revealed gradually through historical experience. The Davidic, prophetic, and Wisdom teachings of immortality could only be adequately made clear after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who having “destroyed death” has “brought life and immortality [aphtharsia] to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10; Augustine, Sermons 4.1). “For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality [athanasia]” (1 Cor. 15:53; Ambrose, On Belief in the Resurrection 2.53-75).

That souls of believers survive death is apparent in such passages as Matthew 10:28 and Luke 23:43. Jesus is “the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies, and whoever lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25; Augustine, Comm. On John, NPNF 1 7:270-78). Those who welcome God’s own coming in faith have already passed from death to life (2 Cor. 5:1; John 5:24; Augustine, Tractates on John 22.6).58

Many end-time understandings are predicated on the belief that there must be destruction, either total or selective, of the literal earth or wickedness on the earth by God. For wickedness to be destroyed, must there be literal destruction or is another understanding possible? When we proclaim that Christ will come again in power and great glory, are we referring to a destructive presence, or a glorious redemption?

Is it possible that Christ comes again in power and great glory every time a person shares love, grace and the peace of God with another? Through ecumenical accord, the entire body of Christ could be the most beneficially powerful organization on earth. If all persons that identify themselves as followers of Christ could look beyond their theological

differences and agree on Jesus Christ as Lord, unitedly doing the work Jesus commanded
His Church to do, the world could be changed for the better, almost overnight.

Rather than focus on a destructive future event as providing a fresh start for a new
theocratic world government, the course of wisdom seems to be to radically break-down
the barriers that separate the body of Christ, and focus on social justice in all forms. This
important work must begin now, not at some later time.

Part 3. The Anointed Remnant

The Society teaches that there is a limited number of persons, specifically 144,000,
all from among the Jehovah’s Witnesses, that will receive the calling to heavenly life as a
result of Christ’s sacrifice, and that those individuals will have a part in judging the rest of
humanity on the great day of judgment; Armageddon. The Witnesses do not believe
deceased members of this chosen group go directly to heaven at death, but will be raised
to heaven at the resurrection. In the Questions for those Desiring to be Baptized, under the
heading Resurrection, the Society presents:

(2) **How many from among mankind will be raised to heavenly life with Jesus Christ?**

I saw, and, look! the Lamb standing upon Mount Zion, and with him a hundred and forty-four thousand having his name and the name of his Father written on their foreheads. … (Rev. 14:1, 3 *NWT*)

(3) **What will they do there?**

You made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they are to rule as kings over the earth. (Rev. 5:10 *NWT*)

I saw thrones, and there were those who sat down on them … And they came to life and ruled as kings with Christ for a thousand years. Happy and holy is anyone having part in the first resurrection; over these

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the second death has no authority, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will rule as kings with him for the thousand years. (Rev. 20:4, 6 NWT)  

The 144,000 referred to in Revelation, Chapter 14, is taken by the Witnesses as a literal number of persons called exclusively from the ranks of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. These persons will act as judges over the rest of resurrected humankind. A part of the teaching surrounding the Anointed Remnant includes the Society’s literal understanding of Matthew 24:34: “Truly I say to you that this generation will by no means pass away until all these things occur.” (NWT) In this instance the translation is nearly identical to that of the NRSV. The warning about “this generation” is a key Society teaching to remember. 

The Society follows the teaching of its founder, Charles Russell, that the time of the end began with the end of the gentile times, that the event was marked by the beginning of World War I in 1914, and the subsequent changes in worldwide society. The Society refers to that year heavily in their teachings related to the eschaton. The original teaching of Russell was reported to have been revealed to him by Jehovah God, but in many respects mirrors an older teaching of John Darby.iii 

The early Witnesses, The International Bible Students, were proclaiming the significance of the year 1914 decades in advance of the developments of that year. The Society refers to Luke 21:24 in the New World Translation as a starting point for their explanation of these events: “…and Jerusalem will be trampled on by the nations, until the appointed times of the nations are fulfilled.” (NWT) From there, the Society explains that Jerusalem had been the capital city of the Jewish nation – the seat of rulership of the line

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60 Watch Tower Committee, Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry (New York: Watch Tower, 1983), p. 188.
of kings from the house of King David. The Society views these kings as unique among national leaders in that they sat on “Jehovah’s throne” as representatives of God himself.\footnote{Watch Tower Committee, \textit{What Does the Bible Really Teach?} (New York: Watch Tower, 2014), pp. 215, 216.}

The key to the question for the Witnesses is, how and when did God’s rulership begin to be “trampled on by the nations”? The Society asserts that this happened in 607 B.C.E. when Jerusalem was conquered by the Babylonians, Jehovah’s throne became vacant, and the line of kings who descended from David was interrupted. The Society then presents a timetable calculated according to Ezekiel’s prophecy regarding Jerusalem’s last king, Zedekiah: “Remove the turban, and take off the crown … It will not belong to anyone until the one who has the legal right comes, and I will give it to him.” (Ezekiel 21:26, 27 \textit{NWT}) The Society’s explanation of this is: “The one who has the legal right” to the Davidic crown is Christ Jesus. (Luke 1:32 \textit{NWT}) The Society teaches that there was no authorized representative of God’s Kingdom on earth from the time of Jesus earthly life until the Gentile Times had ended.\footnote{Ibid., p. 217.}

This is where the Society’s calculations of end-time dates come into play. The argument is made that the Gentiles would rule for a fixed period of time. The account in Chapter 4 of the Book of Daniel holds the key, for the Witnesses, to unlock the mystery of when the Gentile Times ended and God’s Kingdom began to rule in the heavens and over the earth. Daniel, Chapter 4, relates a prophetic dream experienced by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. He saw a tree of enormous height that was chopped down.

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\footnote{Ibid., p. 217.}
Its stump could not grow because it was banded with iron and copper. An angel declared: “Let seven times pass over it.” (Daniel 4:10-16).

The Society teaches that in the Bible, trees are sometimes used to represent rulership, citing Ezekiel 17:22-24 and 31:2-5. The chopping down of a symbolic tree represents how God’s rulership, as expressed through the kings at Jerusalem, would be interrupted. The vision served notice that this “trampling of Jerusalem” would be temporary; for a period of “seven times.” (Daniel 4:16b)

The Society then refers to Revelation 12: 6 and 14 to define the length of a time:

“And the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there a thousand two hundred and sixty days.” (Revelation 12:6 NWT)

“But the two wings of the great eagle were given the woman, that she might fly into the wilderness to her place; there is where she is fed for a time and times and half a time away from the face of the serpent.” (Revelation 12: 14 NWT)

From that interpretation, the Society continues to explain:

Revelation 12: 6, 14 indicates that three and a half times equal 1,260 days. ‘Seven times’ would therefore last twice as long, or 2,520 days. But the Gentile nations did not stop ‘trampling’ on God’s rulership a mere 2,520 days after Jerusalem’s fall. Evidently, then, this prophecy covers a much longer period of time. On the basis of Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6, which speak of “a day for a year,” the “seven times” would cover 2,520 years.

The 2,520 years began in October 607 B.C.E., when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians and the Davidic king was taken off his throne. The period ended in October 1914. At that time, “the appointed times of the nations” ended, and Jesus Christ was installed as God’s heavenly King. – Psalm 2:1-6; Daniel 7:13, 14.63

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For the Witnesses, the time between the end of the Gentile Times and the Great Day of Jehovah at Armageddon is defined in Matthew, Chapter 24, citing increasing wickedness as a fulfillment of the sign of the end of the age, or system of things.\textsuperscript{64}

The Society teaches that not all of the Anointed Remnant class will die before the Day of Armageddon, and that these persons are the \textit{generation that will not pass away} before the end of the present wicked system of things. The Society teaches that this generation would include anyone that was alive and old enough to be aware of what was happening in 1914.

It is important to note that those of the Anointed Remnant class are the only persons that partake of the emblems (bread and wine) at the annual Memorial Observance (known as the Communion or Eucharist in mainstream Christian traditions).\textsuperscript{65}

The reports published annually in the \textit{Yearbook} by the Society support this belief by indicating a constantly diminishing number of partakers at the annual Memorial Observance, with an interesting exception:

\begin{center}
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|}
\hline
\textbf{Year} & \textbf{Partakers} \\
\hline
1935 & 24,850 \\
1955 & 16,688 \\
1995 & 8,617 \\
2003 & 8,565 \\
2014 & 14,121 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{center}

The declining numbers of those partaking in the elements at the annual Memorial Observance, was used as an indicator of the limited time left before the Great Day of

\textsuperscript{64} Refer to Chapter 2, Part 2 for more on the Society’s teaching concerning Armageddon.

\textsuperscript{65} Refer to Chapter 5, Part 1 for more on the Memorial Observance.
Armageddon arrives, at its appointed time. However in recent years the number of partakers has risen.66

Persons professing to be among the Anointed Remnant are also part of the Faithful and Discreet Slave Class, as understood by the Witnesses. “Who really is the faithful and discreet slave whom his master appointed over his domestics, to give them their food at the proper time? Happy is that slave if his master on arriving finds him doing so. Truly I say to you, He will appoint him over all his belongings” (Matthew 24:45-47 NWT).67

The mainstream Christian hope is predominantly a heavenly hope. The ascension of the risen Lord Jesus opens the door for redeemed humanity to join Christ in His heavenly home, because His Kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). The ascension of the faithful is revealed in Christ’s ascension. The reason Jesus gives for making His ascension is to “prepare a place for” us (humankind) as recorded at John 14:1-3: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also.” (NRSV)

The New World Translation is slightly different in form, yet retains the meaning similar to that of the NRSV: “Do not let your hearts be troubled. Exercise faith in God, exercise faith also in me. In the house of my Father there are many abodes. Otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going my way to prepare a place for you. Also, if I go

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66 Refer to Chapter 5, Part 1, for more on the Memorial Observance.

67 Refer to Chapter 3, Part 1 for more on the Faithful and Discrete Slave Class.
my way and prepare a place for you, I am coming again and will receive you home to myself, that where I am you also may be.” (John 14:1-3 NWT)

The mainstream Christian understanding is that the final destination for redeemed humankind is heaven; the Throne of God (Isa. 66:1). The risen Lord returns to heaven, the Father’s house (John 14:2), the celestial City (Heb. 12:22), the transcendent Jerusalem (Gal. 4:26), the abode of angels (Matt. 6:9-10), and the place not made with human hands (Heb. 9:24).

The Book of Common Prayer 1979, in the service for Ministration at the Time of Death, this Commendatory Prayer is offered:

“Into your hands, O merciful Savior, we commend your servant N. Acknowledge, we humbly beseech you, a sheep of your own fold, a lamb of your own flock, a sinner of your own redeeming. Receive him into the arms of your mercy, into the blessed rest of everlasting peace, and into the glorious company of the saints in light. Amen.”

Part 4. The Other Sheep

For those not called to be part of the Anointed Remnant class, the hope of faithful Witnesses is to be raised to everlasting life on earth. Emphasizing the teaching that survivors of the war of Armageddon and those resurrected to life on earth will inherit everlasting earthly life, the Questions for Those to be Baptized continues under the heading Resurrection:

(4) What is the hope for the rest of mankind that will also be resurrected?

And he went on to say: “Jesus, remember me when you get into your kingdom.” And he said to him: “Truly I tell you today, You will be with me in Paradise.” (Luke 23: 42, 43 NWT)

And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, and he had everlasting good news to declare as glad tidings to those who dwell on the earth … (Rev. 14: 6 NWT)\(^{69}\)

Separation of the *classes*, Anointed Remnant and Other Sheep, is a prominent theme in the Witnesses understanding of eternal life and the kingdom of God.\(^{70}\) The Other Sheep are identified by the Witnesses as those spoken of in Revelation 7:9, following the identification of the 144,000, or the Anointed Remnant: “After these things I saw, and, look! a great crowd, which no man was able to number, out of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, dressed in white robes; and there were palm branches in their hands. (Rev. 7:9 NWT)

The hope of all Witnesses, other than those professing to be among the 144,000, is to attain to everlasting life on earth under the perfect peaceful government of Jesus Christ as God’s king over earth and heaven. This teaching of the Witnesses does not by itself prevent ecumenical accord, yet any belief contrary to that of the Society is viewed as a sign of false religion and is not approved for the Witnesses by the Society, and is a basis to demand separation from other groups of differing beliefs.

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\(^{69}\) Watch Tower Committee, *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry* (New York: Watch Tower, 1983), p. 188.

\(^{70}\) Refer to Chapter 2, Part 3 for a discussion of the Anointed Remnant class and their duties.
Chapter 3. Exclusive Knowledge from Jehovah God

Part 1. The Faithful and Discreet Slave Class

Charles Taze Russell, the first president and theologian of the Watchtower Society, wrote that the “clear unfolding of truth” within his teachings was due to “the simple fact that God’s due time has come; and if I did not speak, and no other agent could be found, the very stones would cry out.” He viewed himself – and all other Christians anointed with the Holy Spirit – as “God’s mouthpiece” and an ambassador of Christ.71

What work is this Anointed Remnant, the Faithful and Discreet Slave, instructed to be doing while alive on the earth? The Society explains:

Rather than being an individual Christian, the ‘faithful slave’ today is the remnant, still living on earth, of the composite body of Christ’s anointed footstep followers. Such remaining ones are a part of spiritual Israel, the anointed congregation of God. (Gal. 6:16; compare Isaiah 43:10) This remnant is faithfully discharging the responsibilities of the “slave” during this time of the end by taking the lead in preaching of “this good news of the kingdom” throughout all the earth and by providing spiritual food at the proper time for the household of faith. –Matt. 24:14.72

The Faithful Slave is given responsibility as the exclusive voice of the one true God, Jehovah, exclusive of all others that have over the ages professed Christ as Messiah. The Society teaches that from the time of the Babylonian exile of the Hebrews beginning in 607 B.C.E, until 1914 C.E., there was no one sitting on the Davidic Throne. During that Time of the Gentiles, according to the Witnesses, the devil ruled over earth and heaven uninterrupted. In October 1914, according to the Society, Jehovah God confirmed to the

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Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses, that they were the Faithful and Discreet Slave foretold for the end time.\footnote{Refer to Chapter 2 for more detail.}

In the excerpt below, the Watchtower Society describes its place in history and the ministry work it has been commanded to perform, as the first and only true voice of Almighty God in all of history:

During these last days of the present wicked system of things, the “belongings” of the Master have increased abundantly throughout all the earth. This has placed a heavy responsibility on the ‘faithful slave.’ In discharging its responsibility to provide spiritual food at the proper time and in order to get the good news of the Kingdom preached before the end comes, the remnant on earth, as “the faithful and Discreet slave” class, has formed certain agencies, or legal entities. It has proved to be the course of wisdom for the ‘faithful slave’ to organize certain corporations that are recognized by the laws of various countries. These religious corporations own and operate printing facilities that produce and distribute Bibles and Bible literature on a worldwide basis for use in the Kingdom ministry.

The first in time and the principle corporation used in this way is the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society of Pennsylvania. This non-profit religious society was incorporated in 1884, is made up of dedicated, baptized Christians and is exclusively devoted to advancing the interests of true worship in the earth.\footnote{Watch Tower Committee, Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry (New York: Watch Tower, 1983), pp. 26-27.}

The Scriptural witness and the mainstream Christian world view present a different understanding of how God speaks to humankind. The use of one exclusive group could not draw all persons to Christ, especially when beginning its work in the late nineteenth century. To ignore the witness of the saints of the Church in living out the mission and ministry of Christ, is to claim to have originated the one true faith independent and apart from all faithful Christians and martyrs of history; and this is what the Witnesses have done.
Here it is important to recall the viewpoint of the founding father of the Watchtower Society, Charles Taze Russell, that the creeds of the great churches were silly (see Introduction, page 5). The recognition of one Holy catholic and apostolic Church is absent from Witness doctrine and teaching. None of the Creeds or historic documents of the Church are accepted in any form by the Society or the Witnesses. Witness teaching and practice is predominately the opposite of anything embodied or found in these documents, the history, or tradition of the mainstream Church. (Refer to the Glossary for a comparison of common mainstream Christian terms with terms unique to the Witnesses).

This separation presents another powerful barrier against ecumenical accord with the Witnesses. The Society’s understanding of itself and the Anointed Remnant class alive on earth today as the Faithful and Discreet Slave of Jehovah’s Kingdom, supports their perceived exclusivity, thereby denying the validity of the one holy catholic and apostolic Church. For the Witnesses, the only authority for teaching true Christian faith, and the voice of Jehovah God, is the Watchtower Society.

By contrast, the mainstream world view, and that supported by the Christian Creeds, is derived from the Greek phrase *kath’ holou* (“referring to the whole”). The Greek words translated to Latin became *catholicus*, or *universal; general*.

This sense of the word [catholic] is retained in the English phrase “catholic taste,” meaning a “wide-ranging taste” rather than a “taste for things that are Roman Catholic.” Older versions of the English Bible often refer to some of the New Testament letters (such as those of James and John) as “catholic epistles,” meaning that they are directed to all Christians…75

For the Church to be *catholic* in nature would require inclusion and, equal respect and recognition for all faith groups recognizing Jesus Christ as the Messiah and the

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fulfillment of redemption prophecy. In the twenty-first century understanding of our call to love and acceptance of all of God’s creation, we are ultimately called to live in cooperative and supportive relationships with all persons, even when our beliefs differ greatly.

Thomas Oden presents the observation that “an idolatrous overvaluation of unity results in uniformity, a tyrannizing excess of superficially imposed unity. The undervaluation or neglect of unity is divisiveness and egocentricity, imagining that one’s own individualistic opinion is more important or more clearly ordained of God than the received consensual apostolic tradition.”\(^76\) The Witnesses as a group display the traits of an individual whose opinion is self-defined as superior to any other religious group, even among groups bearing the title, Christian.

For Oden, the existence of various denominational structures within the Christian tradition is not to be lamented, and the denominations emerged in order to better manifest the marks of the Church, especially holiness and apostolic accountability. He believes it is always better to seek reform and accord rather than simply abandon certain church bodies. “The church is called to dwell patiently in all cultures and generations of time, yet united in one eternal Head animating the body and making it one. (Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 Corinthians 3:10, 11)”\(^77\)

Owen Thomas and Ellen Wondra assert that theologians work to determine Christian faith not only by some classical statement of individual or denominational belief,


\(^{77}\) Ibid., p. 725.
tradition or experience, but in ecumenical and confessional theology and practice as well.\textsuperscript{78}

The Bible as the main source and standard of Christian teaching is not uniform. It contains a multiplicity of different approaches to Christian life and service that must be examined in a theological manner by successive generations. “Furthermore, the thought-categories, stories, and symbols in the Bible must be interpreted and recast into categories, narratives, and symbols accessible in the present.”\textsuperscript{79}

Thomas and Wondra point out that the geology, biology, and historiography of the Bible must be distinguished from the Scriptural testimony of the Bible. “The church has recognized this distinction throughout its history in understanding that revelation and Scripture are given for our \textit{salvation}, which includes social transformation …”\textsuperscript{80} To take the words of any translation or version of the Holy Scriptures literally in any generation since the days of the original writings is an opening to misinterpret and misuse the Scriptures.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries alone, many words changed meaning in the culture of the United States. For example, in the 1960’s the term \textit{gay} meant \textit{happy}. In the modern context, the word \textit{gay} refers to sexual expression. In the 1950’s, \textit{getting high} meant being \textit{drunk} on alcohol. In the modern context the reference is to the abuse of illicit drugs. Given these limited examples, it would seem clear that great care must be taken when interpreting Holy Scripture for the culture of \textit{today}, whatever time in history \textit{today} is, as our language is constantly and rapidly changing.

\textsuperscript{78} Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, \textit{Introduction to Theology}, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Ed. (New York: Morehouse, 2002), p. 16.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., p. 3.

\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
Part 2. The Door-to-Door Ministry

The door-to-door ministry is the best known trademark of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. The Society teaches that all baptized persons, or Publishers, in the context of membership with the Witnesses, are commanded to be regularly active in this ministry:

Jehovah’s modern-day Witnesses recognize the value of preaching the good news systematically from house to house. This method of reaching people with the Kingdom message has been used so extensively by Jehovah’s Witnesses that it has virtually become their trademark in many lands. The good results obtained give proof of Jehovah’s approval and blessing. Also, the wisdom of using this method to reach millions of people effectively with the good news during a short period of time has been confirmed by most gratifying results. (Matt. 11:19; 24:14) Our field ministry has proved to be a most practical way for us to demonstrate love for Jehovah and love for our neighbors. – Matt. 22:24-40.81

A sense of urgency is always in the forefront of Witness’ teaching and practice. This urgency is based in the belief that the end of the system of things and the earthly reign of Christ is coming soon, and in fact is upon us. That urgency translates into an urgent requirement to reach every living human with the good news of the Kingdom before the end, but only through God’s approved channel of communication with mankind; the Faithful and Discreet Slave, as embodied in the Governing Body of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, which is also the Board of Directors of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. The Society explains:

Today the need for reaching people with the good news is even more urgent. The end of the present wicked system of things is approaching at a rapid pace. Life itself is in the balance for all mankind. So there is need for intensive effort on our part, now, before the great tribulation strikes. Seeing the great need, we are moved to increase our efforts in the house-to-house ministry, realizing that no better way has been found to replace this time-tested method of finding those who are hungering for the truth. It is as effective today as it was in the days of Jesus and the apostles. It is a most satisfying way for all of us to share in the ministry.82


82 Ibid., p. 86.
When the Society refers to the proof of God’s blessings being the increase in true believers, they are referring to the increase in new Publishers, or baptized Witnesses. Each year, the Watchtower Society releases a *Yearbook*. The book, about 250 pages in length, serves two purposes for baptized Witnesses worldwide. (1) It includes detailed stories of faithful Society missionaries and pioneers witnessing under difficult circumstances and how they have persevered for the truth. (2) It publishes the Worldwide Report of Jehovah’s Witnesses. This report details the work of the Witnesses in preaching the good news and is used as the chief measure of Jehovah’s blessing on the ministry work of the Witnesses.

In the Reports below, *Publishers* are baptized Witnesses in good standing participating in the door-to-door ministry. *Pioneer Publishers* are persons devoting a minimum of 100 hours per month in the door-to-door ministry. *Number of Branches* refers to Watchtower Society offices in countries other than the United States. *Memorial Attendance* is the total number of persons attending this event held on the night of the Jewish Passover, the Witnesses refer to as the Memorial Observance of Jesus Death. The *Memorial Partakers Worldwide* are those persons that believe they are among the Anointed Remnant or Faithful and Discreet Slave class. These are the only persons that partake of the bread and wine, referred to as the *elements* by the Witnesses, during this once-annual observance.

The 1995 Report\textsuperscript{83} is as follows:

\begin{verbatim}
Number of Countries:..............................232
Peak Publishers:..................................4,914,094
Average Publishers:.............................4,695,111
Percentage of Increase Over 1993:..............5
Number Baptized:................................314,818
Average Pioneer Publishers:.....................636,202
\end{verbatim}

Number of Congregations: 75,573
Total Hours: 1,096,065,354
Average Bible Studies: 4,701,357
Memorial Attendance: 12,288,917
Memorial Partakers Worldwide: 8,617
Number of Branches: 100

The 2003 Report\textsuperscript{84} is as follows:

Branches of Jehovah’s Witnesses: 109
Number of Lands Reporting: 235
Total Congregations: 95,919
Worldwide Memorial Attendance: 16,097,622
Memorial Partakers Worldwide: 8,565
Peak of Publishers in Kingdom Service: 6,429,351
Average Publishers Preaching Each Month: 6,184,046
Percentage Increase Over 2002: 2.2
Total Number Baptized: 258,845
Average Pioneer Publishers Each Month: 825,185
Total Hours Spent in the Field: 1,234,796,477
Average Home Bible Studies Each Month: 5,726,509

The 2014 Report\textsuperscript{85} is as follows:

Branches of Jehovah’s Witnesses: 90
Number of Lands Reporting: 239
Total Congregations: 115,416
Worldwide Memorial Attendance: 19,950,019
Memorial Partakers Worldwide: 14,121
Peak of Publishers in Kingdom Service: 8,201,545
Ave. Publishers Preaching Each Month: 7,867,958
Percentage of Increase Over 2013: 2.2
Total Number Baptized: 275,581
Ave. Auxiliary Pioneers Each Month: 635,298
Ave. Pioneer Publishers Each Month: 1,089,446
Total Hours Spent in Field: 1,945,487,604
Ave. Home Bible Studies Each Month: 9,499,933


Notice the increase in the number of Memorial Partakers Worldwide from 2003 to 2014. This is an interesting shift from the generations prior, when the number was constantly declining. The declining number was previously used as a measure of the nearness of the Great Day of Armageddon. That final day is believed, by the Witnesses, to come before the last living member of the Anointed Remnant has died in the flesh.\(^{86}\)

Since late in 2003, the Society had to re-think this teaching, and began to recognize the number of the Anointed Remnant to be unfulfilled due to the possible falling-away of previously faithful members of this group. This adjustment in understanding opened the way for others to profess their calling to be a part of the Class. As a result, the number of those professing has risen.

Notice as well the increases in every other numerical measure of growth and success in ministry. New Kingdom Halls and Watchtower Branch Offices in various countries are constantly being built. Between 2003 and 2014, the Society reports 19,497 new congregations had been formed, resulting in an average annual growth of 1,772 new congregations per year worldwide. The average Publishers (baptized Witnesses engaging in the Field Ministry) grew from 6,429,351 in 2003 to 8,201,545 in 2014, resulting in an average increase of 161,109 new publishers per year in the same eleven year period.

This is impressive growth in itself, but perhaps more impressive is the amount of time Witnesses devote to the door-to-door Field Ministry. Each publisher is required to participate regularly, that is every month of the year, in the Field Ministry in one of its forms. For some this is leaving Watchtower and Awake magazines in public places such as laundromats and bus stops. For others it is knocking on doors and offering the

\(^{86}\) Refer to Chapter 2, Part 3 for more on the Anointed Remnant Class.
householder the Truth, as the Witnesses refer to their beliefs. It would be difficult, if not impossible to find anyone that has not been contacted by the Jehovah’s Witnesses in one way or another. The number of hours the Witnesses as an organization spend in the Field Ministry is staggering. In 2014 alone, the Witnesses worldwide reported 1,945,487,604 hours. That is an average of 237 hours per year, or 19.77 hours per month, per Publisher.

Those listed in the Yearbook Reports as Pioneer Publishers and Auxiliary Pioneers are required to devote a minimum of 60-120 hours per month each as part of their agreement as Pioneers in the Kingdom Ministry. Many of these serve in the United States. Those that serve in other countries are referred to by the Society as missionaries. The remainder of the Publishers worldwide are required to report Field Ministry hours equal to or greater than the average per month reported the previous year, and this is always an increasing number.

The sales-type organization plan and related reporting, was devised by the third President of the Society, Nathan Knorr, a highly successful shoe salesman and the innovator of the Field Ministry. For the Witnesses, the measure of the effectiveness of the Field Ministry and the proof of Jehovah’s blessing on the Organization is the increasing numbers of Publishers (members).

The level of detail with which the Witnesses’ Field Ministry is carried out and tracked is equally impressive. Field Service Report forms and Territory Report forms are provided by the Society and are mandatory for use by all publishers. The Field Service Report is submitted monthly by all publishers and reports the numbers of these items placed in the field: Books/Sign-Language/Videos; Brochures/Tracts; Hours; Magazines;

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87 Refer to the Introduction of this document for a brief history of Society leadership and development.
Return Visits; and Bible Studies. These reports must be turned-in to the Congregation Field Service Servant, or Congregation Secretary by the end of the first week of the month for the previous month. If no report is received from an individual Publisher, the elders will contact them concerning the oversight. If it is discovered that no Field Ministry was performed by this publisher, the publisher will be counselled by the elders on the requirement to participate actively and regularly in the ministry.

If no Field Service Report is submitted for three consecutive months, that publisher will be placed on a watch list. If no Report is submitted for six consecutive months, the publisher may be removed from approved status in the Organization and will lose congregational privileges as an inactive publisher, including participating in the Ministry School or Public Meetings. The faithful publishers in the congregation will be alerted to the need to minimize associations with an inactive publisher.

The Territory Report is a form that is returned to the Congregation Servant with the Territory Map that was issued to an individual publisher as the group leader in the field. On the Territory Report the publisher records any special conditions related to a particular address on the Territory Map, such as: Former (disfellowshipped) Witness, Bad Dog, Man with Gun, unoccupied, etc. This information is then passed-on to the next publisher that checks that particular Territory out for service. The goal of the Society is to work each Territory assigned to the local congregation at least every six months.

If the Witnesses do not find anyone home when they go to the door, they will leave a tract, magazine, or brochure explaining why they were there. Every piece of printed material produced and distributed by the Society now bears the website information for the Watchtower Society (www.jw.org). On this website every book, tract, brochure, and
magazine published by the Society within the last twenty years or so is viewable, except the book *Organized to Accomplish our Ministry* (the book of doctrine and canon for the Witnesses). This book is only available to baptized Witnesses and those known associates preparing for Baptism in the Organization.

The Witnesses are to be applauded for their devotion to the Field Ministry, and the level of detail used to carry it out. The Witnesses devote their personal funds to the expense of providing and maintaining a vehicle for the work. The Witnesses, or Publishers, often purchase the printed materials with their personal funds and give it to interested persons free of charge.

As part of their ministry, the Witnesses report missionary and relief activities in various parts of the world. The relief ministries the Society supports are not ministries to the world at large, but are limited to helping other Witnesses. One example of this is the report in the Yearbook 2014 regarding a relief effort performed by the Witnesses in 1998, offered as a historical report of the important work of the Witnesses:

On September 22, 1998, Hurricane Georges tore through the Dominican Republic with winds of 120 miles per hour, causing extensive damage. Thousands were left homeless, and over 300 were killed. A Disaster Relief Committee set up a relief center on a Kingdom Hall property in La Romana, with the help of a Regional Building Committee. Approximately 300 volunteers assisted with the relief work, including Witnesses from 16 other countries.

In total, 23 Kingdom Halls and over 800 homes of our brothers and sisters had to be repaired or rebuilt. … Although Hurricane Georges was a major disaster, the loving efforts of Jehovah’s people brought physical and spiritual comfort to our brothers and sisters who were victims of that storm. Most important, the self-sacrificing effort of the volunteers brought praise to Jehovah, the source of genuine comfort. 88

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It is important to note that only Organization insiders are considered *brothers* and *sisters* to the Witnesses. All others are considered their *neighbors*, yet still branded as part of the *world*, and not brothers or sisters.\(^8^9\) The relief work detailed in the above article was to benefit other Witnesses and for the glory of Jehovah, not to benefit the *world* or those persons in it. When a person professes faith within the guidelines of the Society, they become brothers and sisters and then receive the benefits of being a part of Jehovah’s Kingdom, and no part of the wicked world.\(^9^0\)

In regard to caring for the poor, the Society refers to assisting disadvantaged brothers and sisters, in the congregation, due to “advanced age, infirmity or some adversity beyond their control.”\(^9^1\) The section of the *Organization* book entitled, *Caring for the Poor*, contains detailed Scriptural instruction leading the reader to view financial contributions, field service, and physical labor as equally required in service to Jehovah God. All of the Society’s teachings on ministry to the poor are supported by Scriptural references from the *New World Translation*.\(^9^2\)

While many major Christian groups are declining in membership, especially among the more traditional Christian denominations in America and Europe, the Witnesses are reporting consistent growth. This is mainly due to the high level of importance placed on

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\(^8^9\) Refer to the Glossary for a better understanding of Watch Tower Society terms.

\(^9^0\) Refer to Chapter 2, Part 1 for more on the Witnesses’ understanding of the world-at-large as compared to the Kingdom of Jehovah.


\(^9^2\) The Scriptures cited by the Watch Tower Society to define ministry to the poor include: Mark 14:3-5; John 13:39; Mark 14:7; 1 John 3:17, 18; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12; James 1:27; 2:14-17; 1 Timothy 5:3-21; Matthew 24:7-9; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 9:1-5; John 13:35 (*NWT*).
the Field Ministry. It is the chief means by which new Witnesses are developed. The conversion process works like this. The first contact with the Witnesses begins with a question like: “Would you like to live in a world without crime or corrupt governments? I would like to offer you this tract that explains more about the coming Kingdom of God.”

The tract, Good News from God, begins with this answer to all of mankind’s problems:

1. What is the news from God?

   God wants people to enjoy life on earth. He created the earth and everything on it because he loves mankind. Soon he will act to provide a better future for people in every land. He will relieve mankind of the causes of suffering. Read Jeremiah 29:11.

   No government has ever succeeded in eliminating violence, disease, or death. But there is good news. Shortly, God will replace all human governments with his own government. Its subjects will enjoy peace and good health. Read Isaiah 25:8, 33:24; Daniel 2:44.

2. Why is the good news urgent?

   Suffering will only end when God clears the earth of bad people. (Zephaniah 2:3) When will that happen? God’s Word foretold the conditions that now threaten mankind. Current events indicate that God’s time to act is close. Read 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

3. What should we do?

   We should learn about God from his Word, the Bible. It is like a letter to us from a loving father. It tells us how to enjoy a better way of life now and how to enjoy everlasting life on earth in the future. True, some may not like it that you are receiving help to understand the Bible. But the opportunity of a better future is too good to miss. Read Proverbs 29:25; Revelation 14:6, 7.

   Every topic is supported by references to the Bible, frequently taken as stand-alone readings, and always interpreted in the light of Society doctrine. The Witnesses are taught

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to use both the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, as they refer to them, for all truth. For the Witnesses, the Bible is like “a letter from a loving father”. No teaching is offered by the Society to define how the world came to have the collection of sixty-six books commonly known as the canon of Holy Scripture. The Witnesses are unaware of the value of the Apocryphal books, or the importance of the historic documents of the mainstream Church. In fact, many Witnesses are not aware of the existence of these valuable documents.

When a person expresses interest in the Witnesses’ teaching, the Publisher immediately requests to start a Bible Study with the individual, or householder. In years past, the Bible Study was held each week in the interested persons’ home. In recent years, the persecution-mentality of the Witnesses has increased and the Bible Studies are held in small groups.

Although there is no specific comparative ministry in the mainstream Christian world to that of the Witnesses, there are many very effective ministries active in the world today, among mainstream and independent Christian groups. The model of detail and devotion to real-world ministries can be a lesson learned by all of the Church.

Part 3. Financial Support for the Ministry

Offerings have never been taken at any meeting of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Each Kingdom Hall has a Contribution Box mounted on the wall or a pedestal somewhere near the back of the main room. The Witnesses are generally very faithful in making regular contributions. The placard on the front of the Contribution Box reads, “Contributions to Support Kingdom Ministry”. At recent Conventions of Jehovah’s Witnesses, the

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Contribution Box has been eliminated and Credit/Debit card acceptors are located at various locations in the arena or stadium.

In the book *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry*, the Society details how the Kingdom Ministry is supported. The reader is first directed to Jesus’ direction, “you received free, give free.” (Matthew 10:8b NWT) They were to trust in Jehovah to sustain the ministry. The Society then points out, “The Kingdom good news was not to be commercialized, nor was it to be used for selfish personal advantage.”

The Society owns large commercial properties, including high-rise housing and printing plants in Brooklyn, New York, and massive agricultural farms and printing plants in New York State. At these facilities, all publications produced by the Society are developed, printed, and distributed to over 200 countries. New facilities for the Bethel Home and Bethel School are being built in New York State. These new facilities will house state-of-the-art printing presses and bindery equipment. The new world headquarters of the Watch Tower Society is also under construction in Warwick, New York. Hundreds of Witnesses have been travelling to Warwick and donating labor and materials to this major-scale project.

In the *Yearbook 2015*, the introduction to the section entitled, *Highlights of the Past Year*, opens with this statement from the Governing Body:

“Jehovah God inspired the prophet Isaiah to foretell: ‘Instead of the copper I will bring in gold, and instead of the iron I will bring in silver, and instead of the wood, copper, and instead of the stones, iron.’ (Isa. 60:17) During the past year, we have seen clear evidence that this prophecy continues to be fulfilled. Just as replacing an inferior material with a superior one denotes improvement, Jehovah’s

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Witnesses have experienced improvements in their organizational arrangements during this time of the end. – Matt.24:3”96

Volunteer workers at the Warwick construction site are publishing statements like these: “Warwick has become much more than just buildings. Jehovah is unifying the various construction teams and helping us to rethink how we design and plan major construction projects.” “This has been the most faith-strengthening experience of my life.”97 Projects like those being completed in Warwick, New York normally cost several millions of dollars. No financial information on these projects is ever released by the Society.

The Witnesses most often give the printed literature to interested persons without cost. The Watchtower and Awake magazines of the 1960’s and 1970’s were placed for a donation of five or ten cents each (USD). Now the Witnesses rarely ask for a donation. So how is this ministry and all of the printing and publishing operations supported?

“…Jehovah’s Witnesses send voluntary contributions to local branch offices of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society. Seeing the need, they demonstrate the same willing spirit that motivated God’s servants whose generous giving in ancient times supplied the needs for building Jehovah’s place of worship. (Ex. 35:20-29)”98

In the Questions for Those Desiring to be Baptized, the Society sets forth the biblical example for supporting the ministry of the Witnesses. Under the heading Honoring Jehovah With Your Valuable Things, the interviewer asks the question:

(1) What pattern set in ancient Israel serves as a model for giving material support to the Kingdom work today?

And the people gave way to rejoicing over their making voluntary offerings, for it was with a complete heart that they made voluntary offerings to Jehovah; and even David the king himself rejoiced with great joy. – 1 Chron. 29:9. Additional references: Exodus 35:21, 22,29; Proverbs 3:9, 10; Malachi 3:10.99

Although the local congregations present a monthly financial report to the congregation, the only information included in that report is the financial activity of the local congregation (total contributions, utilities, etc.). The governing Organization, the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society never releases a financial report. The Witnesses “consider it a privilege to use their money and other material possessions to advance the Christian ministry.”100 In my experience, the Witnesses view the ten-percent rule (tithe) as a minimum obligation. Most Witnesses give on an even higher level.

When the contributions at the local congregation exceed the expenses, most of the excess is sent to the Society at the Headquarters, or to one of the foreign Branch Offices. “Special needs may arise from time to time, but when each one endeavors to remain alert to the needs of the congregation, it should not be necessary to make frequent announcements regarding contributions.”101 The Witnesses maintain an impressive pattern of giving that supports all of the work of the Society worldwide.

For the Witnesses, there is never an offering taken at any of the meetings or conventions. There is never a stewardship drive. There is never a capital campaign. The

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100Ibid., pp. 120-121.

101Ibid., p. 122.
deep-seated faith of the Witnesses moves them to give willingly to support the Kingdom work with their time, talents, and finances. Faithful Witnesses place no importance on retirement plans or saving for the future, beyond minimal needs.

For most of the mainstream Church, financial stability is a constant concern. Declining memberships and historically weak financial support have forced the closure of many local congregations. Stewardship and capital campaigns struggle to fulfill minimal budgets. If financial success or an increase in membership were the only indicator used to measure God’s approval, the universal Church would seem to be failing, presumably due to God’s disapproval. If, however, periodic declines of the Church are a natural part of our cultural development, then all things happen according to God’s plan.

It would seem that many mainstream Christian groups are struggling with relevance in a world where much of religion has become irrelevant, at least among the highly-developed countries. Negative media leaves a deeper impression than positive results. For an increasingly large portion of human society, religion has no substance.

At the same time, independent mega-churches have emerged, often drawing thousands of active members. These facilities are often new, fully-accessible, program oriented, family-friendly Churches that provide exciting and colorful worship experiences for all ages. Is their success related to the relevance of their teaching and ministries? Is that relevance gained at the price of losing traditional integrity? Is there a group dynamic that feeds on and grows out of the activity of these Churches; activity encourages greater activity? It seems there are no easy answers.

The widespread lack of funding among many mainstream Churches may not only be a result of the loss of relevance in human society, especially among the developed
nations of the world, but the societal perception that the Church worships money; or at least places high importance on money. Yes, the expenses of the Church must be paid and money fills that mundane need. However, the perception that money is the most important thing to the Church may be fueled by an apparent lack of meaningful mission work in the local community; the perception of all take and no give.

Is it possible to perform meaningful, effective mission work, for the glory of God and Christ, without emphasizing money? It is, but the overall attitude of church leaders often leans toward focusing on cost, not results. If results and the genuine graceful giving of gifts and talents are the first measure of a successful ministry, the need for money is viewed less negatively. If no genuine results are recognized or realized, a negative viewpoint can be cultivated.

Mainstream Christian groups engage in numerous mission programs with remarkable success. The Episcopal Church addresses domestic poverty in many ways: through its network of over 600 Jubilee Ministries; one- and two-year Justice and Advocacy Fellowships based on the Anglican Marks of Mission; Asset-Based Community Development; collaboration with diocesan and congregational ministries around the world; and annual block-grant programs for the development (or enrichment) of local ministries. Through these ministries, The Episcopal Church seeks “to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19).

The Lutheran Church engages in numerous outreach ministries, including relief missions worldwide. With the support of donors worldwide, Lutheran Relief Ministries

(LRM) has kept the Haitian Lutheran Orphanage open by supplying the children with food, clothes, and education in a loving Christian atmosphere. Donations have enabled LRM to pay 26 village teachers, the teachers in Fond Rouge, reopen the Philadelphia school in the city of Jeremie, and through Trinity Hope Lutheran Church provide a daily meal for the children in Dame Marie. Trinity Hope is able to continue supplying a daily meal in the other schools as well. This is just one of the thousands of highly-effective outreach ministries operated by the Lutheran Church worldwide.\textsuperscript{103}

For the Presbyterian Church, the year 2012 marked the 175\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of international mission by the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church. Over the years, Presbyterian missionaries have planted churches, built hospitals, and started schools on every continent. The seeds sown by those missionaries have, in many places, developed into self-sustaining churches and institutions now led by local Christians. More than 94 million Christians around the world now belong to churches that were founded or co-founded by Presbyterian Church, USA mission workers. By founding and supporting schools, disadvantaged persons are able to receive valuable skills for future success. Education promotes human development, and basic literacy is a gateway skill that empowers the poor to emerge from poverty. Extensive research has shown that a quality education (regardless of gender, wealth, location, ethnicity, or language) is the best pathway out of poverty.\textsuperscript{104}

Catholic Outreach Ministries are widely varied. Among them are outreach programs for orphans and vulnerable children. In the village of Namaacha, Mozambique

\textsuperscript{103} Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, \url{http://www.elca.org/Our-Work/Relief-and-Development} (accessed February 23, 2015).

\textsuperscript{104} Presbyterian Church USA, \url{www.pcusa.org} (accessed February 23, 2015).
where unemployment keeps many families trapped in poverty, the HIV/AIDS crisis has left a trail of orphans, single-parent households, and street children, Christian relief ministries provide, food, clothing and education. In Cholle, Ethiopia there was no kindergarten at all until 2004 when the Consolata Missionaries opened a Catholic preschool for children. In Guatemala’s remote mountain villages, families have no access to jobs, health care, or education and depend on subsistence farming to survive. Malnutrition runs rampant, especially among young children. Catholic Outreach Ministries provides for these needs and gives hope to the helpless.\textsuperscript{105}

\textit{Part 4. The New System}

\textit{The New System}, is a highly developed teaching of the Witnesses based on their core belief that Jehovah God will destroy all wickedness and cleanse the earth once and for all, and that faithful Witnesses, the only survivors of the day of Armageddon, and the resurrected faithful persons, will live forever on the earth with the responsibility to cultivate it into the global paradise Jehovah intended it to be under the guidance of pre-fall Adam and Eve and their offspring.

The Society produces numerous tracts, brochures, magazines and books with titles such as: \textit{How Can You Have a Happy Life?; What is the Key to Happy Family Life?; Will Suffering Ever End?; Lasting Peace and Happiness – How to Find Them}. All of these publications and hundreds of others like them teach Society doctrine in light of the overall understanding that wickedness on earth will end when Jehovah God destroys everyone not

\textsuperscript{105} Catholic Relief Services, \url{www.crs.org} (accessed February 23, 2015).
approved by Him, and everything that stands against peace, security, and everlasting life on a paradise earth.

In the tract, *What is the Kingdom of God?*\(^{106}\), the Watchtower Society presents this introductory definition:

**What The Bible Says:** “The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed.”
- Daniel 2:44, *New World Translation*

“A son has been given to us; and the government will rest on his shoulder.”
– Isaiah 9:6; footnote.

**What That Can Mean For You:**
- A righteous government that can benefit you personally.
  – Isaiah 48:17, 18.
- In a coming new world, life in perfect health and happiness.

For the Witnesses, the New System will be a worldwide, earthly government, governed by Jesus Christ, as the King and honored son of Jehovah God. The New System will be the fulfillment of the Bible prophecies of a *new heavens and new earth*, and described as the *New Jerusalem*. (Revelation 21:1, 2, 22-24) The government of the New System in heaven is comprised of members of the Anointed Remnant, as the Bridegroom of Christ, and Jesus himself, and will rule over all the earth from heaven. The New System on earth will then be comprised of only humans who have demonstrated their willing submission to God’s Kingdom in heaven. These will spend their eternal lives on a paradise earth with no aging, sickness, pain or death.\(^{107}\)

This New System, or New Order will be the result of Jehovah’s righteous government having total control over the cleansed earth and all humans inhabiting it at that


time. In a four-page tract entitled *Why is Life so Full of Problems?: Is a Trouble-Free Paradise Possible?*, the Watchtower Society presents an explanation of why the world is so wicked:

This world’s religions have failed. Instead of helping solve today’s problems, this world’s religious systems add to them. During wars, Catholics kill Catholics, Protestants kill Protestants – by the millions. Not long ago in Rwanda, where most are Catholic, people killed one another by the hundreds of thousands!

Would Jesus go to war with a rifle or a machete and kill his disciples because their nationality was different from his? Surely not! …

Further, by not really upholding Bible standards of morality, the world’s religions contribute to the shocking moral breakdown earth wide.\(^{108}\)

The above statements highlight the conviction the Witnesses have regarding the nature of mainstream Christian Churches, and a basis to support their prohibition of *interfaith* practices. This is another factor prohibiting ecumenical cooperation.

The most popular door-opener for the Witnesses is the appeal of everlasting life on earth in the perfection originally possessed by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The descriptions of life in the New World are filled with images of Paradise. If you could, wouldn’t you solve all the problems that afflict mankind? Of course you would! Should we think that our loving Creator, who alone has the power and the wisdom to solve mankind’s problems, will do any less?

The Bible reveals that God will intervene in human affairs by means of his heavenly government in the hands of Jesus Christ. It will “crush” corrupt governments on earth. (Daniel 2:44; Matthew 6:9, 10) …

In God’s new world, “Death will be no more, neither will mourning nor outcry nor pain be anymore.” (Revelation 21:4) No more crime, poverty, hunger, sickness, sorrow, or death! Why, even dead ones will live again! “There is going

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to be a resurrection.” (Acts 24:15) And the earth itself will be transformed into a literal paradise. – Isaiah 35:1, 2; Luke 23:43.109

Urgency has been key to the Witnesses belief system since its inception in the late 19th-Century. In the Questions for Those Desiring to be Baptized, the urgency of the present time is tied to Jesus’ words concerning the time of the end at Matthew, Chapter 24:

“While he was sitting upon the Mount of Olives, the disciples approached him privately, saying: “Tell us, When will these things be, and what will be the sign of your presence and of the conclusion of the system of things.” (Matthew 24:3 NWT) The statements attributed to Jesus that follow are then used to define the current conditions of the world at any given time, and are presented as a sign that we are ever-closer to the time when it will be too late to accept the Truth as presented by the Witnesses.

The statement below from the Watchtower Committee highlights the ever-present urgency and warns against questioning the Society, which is, for the Witnesses, equal to questioning God:

Sadly, though, some have become casual or even cynical about reminders concerning the need to stay awake. ‘We have heard that same reminder for decades,’ they may say. However, those individuals should keep in mind that by making such remarks, they are actually questioning Jehovah and his Son, not just the faithful slave class. “Keep in expectation,” Jehovah said. (Hab. 2:3) Likewise, Jesus stated: “Keep on the watch … because you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.” (Matt 24:42) In addition, Peter wrote: “What sort of persons ought you to be in holy acts of conduct and deeds of godly devotion, awaiting and keeping close in mind the presence of the day of Jehovah!” (2 Pet. 3:11, 12) Never will the faithful slave class and its Governing Body take a casual view of those earnest words!110


The Society is always stressing to the Witnesses, and to the world, that the time is short, echoing the words of Jesus, “This generation will by no means pass away until all these things happen.” (Mark 13:30; Matthew 24:34; Luke 21:32, NWT). If the generation alive and listening to Jesus in the first-century was the audience, the return of Jesus seems very late. If the generation that was alive in 1914 is being spoken to, as the Witnesses contend, the return of Jesus is late. This is a subject for further discussion.
Chapter 4. The Death of Jesus

Part 1. The Body and Blood

In the section of the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures entitled, Bible Topics for Discussion, under the heading Ransom, this entry appears:

A. Jesus’ human life paid as a “ransom for all”
   Jesus gave his life a ransom..............................Mt 20:28
   Value of shed blood provides remission of sin........Heb 9:14, 22
   One sacrifice was sufficient for all time............Ro 6:10; Heb 9:26
   Benefits are not automatic; must be acknowledged........Joh 3:16

B. Was corresponding price
   Adam created perfect..............................De 32:4; Ec 7:29; Ge 1:31
   Lost perfection for self and children by sin..........Ro 5:12, 18
   Children helpless; exact equal of Adam needed...Ps 49:7; De 19:21
   Jesus’ perfect human life a ransom............1Ti 2:5, 6; 1Pe 1:18, 19

Notice the third entry under B above. This is a significant entry in that it emphasizes the completely human nature of Jesus in the mind of the Witnesses; “exact equal of Adam needed”. In many cases, the Society uses select verses of Scripture, even parts of individual verses to answer questions and justify doctrinal points of view, without making reference to the context within the surrounding and larger text. For example, the citation of Psalm 49:7 above to emphasize the ransom paid by Jesus reads, “Not one of them can by any means redeem even a brother, Nor give to God a ransom for him;” (NWT).

Also consider the Society’s use of Deuteronomy 19:21 in the same reference: “And your eye should not feel sorry; soul will be for soul, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.” (NWT) This section of Scripture is referring to the work of the Judges

in Israel, but is used by the Society in reference to the ransom sacrifice paid by Jesus to buy back the perfection Adam lost.

Now refer to entries two and three under heading A above and the differences in translation between the NWT and the NRSV taking into consideration the resulting shift in emphasis and doctrine at Hebrews 9:14, 22 & 26, keeping in mind that contextual understandings are not accounted for in the references by the Society:

(NWT)...how much more will the blood of Christ, who through an everlasting spirit offered himself without blemish to God, cleanse our consciences from dead works that we may render sacred service to [the] living God? ... Yes, nearly all things are cleansed with blood according to the Law, and unless blood is poured out no forgiveness takes place. ... Otherwise, he would have to suffer often from the founding of the world. But now he has manifested himself once for all time at the conclusion of the systems of things to put sin away through the sacrifice of himself.\textsuperscript{112}

(NRSV) ...how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to worship the living God! ... Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. ... for then he would have to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to remove sin by the sacrifice of himself.\textsuperscript{113}

It is important to note how the Witnesses attitude toward blood affects their view of the sacrifice of Jesus and the mainstream Christian practice of partaking in the Bread and Wine of the Eucharist as in any way the Body and Blood of Jesus.

The Society explains that after the flood of Noah’s day, God gave humans permission to eat the flesh of animals, but not the blood. “Only flesh with its life – its blood – you must not eat.” (Genesis 9:4 NWT) “If any man ... eats any sort of blood, I will


certainly set my face against the one who is eating blood, and I will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood …” (Leviticus 17:10, 11 NWT)

Some 2,400 years after the Noachian decree and about 1,500 years after the Law covenant was made, Jehovah inspired the governing body of the early Christian congregation to write: “The holy spirit and we ourselves have favored adding no further burden to you except these necessary things: to keep abstaining from things sacrificed to idols, from blood, from what is strangled, and from sexual immorality.” – Acts 15:28, 29.

Clearly, the early governing body discerned that blood is sacred and that misusing it is as morally wrong as participating in idolatry or committing sexual immorality. True Christians today accept that stand. Moreover, because they think in terms of Bible principles, they are able to please Jehovah when making decisions about the use of blood.114

Based on the above understanding, the Society goes on to explain why Jehovah’s Witnesses are barred from receiving medical blood transfusions. “Jehovah’s Witnesses recognize that ‘abstaining from … blood’ means not accepting blood transfusions and not donating or storing their own blood for transfusion. Out of respect for God’s law, they also do not accept the four primary components of blood; red cells, white cells, platelets, and plasma.”115

When considering the question of the emblems of the Memorial as to the presence of Christ making the bread and wine, the Body and Blood of Christ, the Witnesses often use the reference to abstain from blood to compare the Roman Catholic understanding of transubstantiation to an act of idolatry or comparable to an act of sexual immorality.

Although the Anglican tradition does not embrace the Roman Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation, in that the bread and wine of the Eucharist become the actual Body and Blood of the Lord Jesus, the Anglican tradition does espouse the doctrine of


115 Ibid., p. 79.
Consubstantiation, or *real presence*, in that the bread and wine become *for us* the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Book of Common Prayer 1979 of The Episcopal Church contains two versions of the Eucharistic Prayer, each of which highlight the concept that the bread and wine of the Eucharist become, in a spiritual sense, the Body and Blood of Christ for believers:

[Rite 1] And we most humbly beseech thee, O merciful Father, to hear us; and of thy almighty goodness, vouchsafe to bless and sanctify, with thy Word and Holy Spirit, these thy gifts and creatures of bread and wine; that we, receiving them according to thy Son our Savior Jesus Christ’s holy institution, in remembrance of his death and passion, may be partakers of his most blessed Body and Blood.116

[Rite 2] Sanctify them [bread and wine] by your Holy Spirit to be for your people the Body and Blood of your Son, the holy food and drink of new and unending life in him.117

The Book of Worship of the United Methodist Church also contains language of a similar form in the Great Thanksgiving: “Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here, and on these gifts of bread and wine. Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ, that we may be for the world the body of Christ, redeemed by his blood.”118

**Part 2. The Cross as a Pagan Symbol**

The Witnesses refer to the Christian Cross, in all of its forms to be a pagan symbol. The hint of this is first noticeable in the *New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures* (*NWT*). Consider this comparison of Matthew 10:38:

“and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” (NRSV)

117 Ibid., p. 363.
“And whoever does not accept his torture stake and follow after me is not worthy of me” (NWT)

Or Matthew 16:24:

“Then Jesus told his disciples, ‘If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.’” (NRSV)

“Then Jesus said to his disciples, ‘If anyone wants to come after me, let him disown himself and pick up his torture stake and continually follow me.” (NWT)

Or Matthew 27:32:

“As they went out, they came upon a man from Cyrene named Simon; they compelled this man to carry his cross.” (NRSV)

“As they were going out they found a native of Cy-re’ne named Simon. This man they impressed into service to lift up his torture stake.” (NWT)

Finally, compare Matthew 27:40b and 42b.119

“If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross … He is the King of Israel; let him come down from the cross now, and we will believe in him.” (NRSV)

“If you are a son of God, come down off the torture stake! … He is King of Israel; let him now come down off the torture stake and we will believe on him.” (NWT)

In every instance, when referring to the instrument of Jesus public execution, the word Cross has been replaced with torture stake throughout all of The New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures. On page 1357 of the NWT, is a brief Concordance, entitled Important Bible Words For Quick Reference. Under the heading, Cross, there is one reference: See TORTURE STAKE(S).

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On page 1433, under the heading *Torture Stake(s)*, these scriptures are referenced in the *New World Translation*: Mt 27:40; Mr 15:32; Lu 9:23; Lu 23:26; Eph 2:16; Php 2:8; Php 3:18; Col 2:14; Heb 12:2; Mt. 10:38; Joh 19:31; 1Cor 1:17; Ga 6:14.\(^{120}\)

It is important to remember the Witnesses’ rejection of anything associated with the worldwide Christian community and their complete denial of the relevance of the historical Church. The Society teaches that no one occupied the Davidic throne from 607 B.C.E. until October 1914, when the Gentile Times ended and Jesus took the throne in heaven. As a result, Charles Russell and his followers believed themselves to be the Faithful and Discreet Slave called by Jehovah God to dispense the only true religion (The Truth) in this time of the end.

The Society further teaches that all other religions are false. The word *Christendom*\(^{vi}\) carries a negative connotation in the Witnesses’ language. To emphasize the separateness and uniqueness of the Witnesses, and thereby the trueness of Society teaching, the symbol of the Cross is denied by the Witnesses. A highly detailed argument against the belief that Jesus was executed on a cross is taught by the Society. This is an extension of their denial of all things related to the one holy catholic and apostolic Church, and especially the Roman Catholic Church.

In the book, *Reasoning on the Scriptures*, the Society presents its argument against the Christian symbol of the Cross:

**Why do Watch Tower Publications show Jesus on a stake with hands over his head instead of the traditional cross?**

The Greek word rendered “cross” in many Bible versions (“torture stake” in NW) is *stau-ros*. In classical Greek, this word meant merely an upright stake, or pale. Later it also came to be used for an execution stake having a crosspiece.

The Imperial Bible-Dictionary acknowledges this, saying: The Greek word for cross, [stau-ros’], properly signified a stake, an upright pole, or piece of paling, on which anything might be hung, or which might be used in impaling [fencing in] a piece of ground … Even amongst the Romans the crux (from which our cross is derived) appears to have been originally an upright pole.” – Edited by P. Fairbairn (London, 1874), Vol. 1, p. 376.

It is noteworthy that the Bible also used the word xy’lon to identify the device used. A Greek-English Lexicon, by Liddell and Scott, defines this as meaning: “Wood cut and ready for use, firewood, timber, etc. … piece of wood, log, beam, post … cudgel, club … stake on which criminals were impaled … of live wood, tree.” It also says “in NT, of the cross” and cites Acts 5:30 and 10:39 as examples. (Oxford, 1968, pp. 1191, 1192) However, in those verses KJ, RS, JB, and DY translate xy’lon as “tree.” (Compare this rendering with Galatians 3:13; Deuteronomy 21:22, 23.)

Thus the weight of the evidence indicates that Jesus died on an upright stake and not on a traditional cross.121

To the contrary, the definition of xy’lon appears sufficiently broad as to allow for application to any piece of wood in any shape or form. How do the Witnesses connect the Christian symbol of the Cross to pagan beliefs? By first citing the Encyclopedia Britannica of 1946:

“Various objects, dating from periods long anterior to the Christian era, have been found, marked with crosses of different designs … India, Syria, Persia and Egypt have all yielded numberless examples … The use of the cross as a religious symbol in pre-Christian times and among non-Christian peoples may probably be regarded as almost universal, and in very many cases it was connected to some form of worship.” – Encyclopaedia Britannica (1946), Vol. 6, p.753.122

The Society goes on to cite examples of the symbol of a cross being used in worship by the Chaldeans, as a symbol of the false god Tammuz: “In order to increase the prestige of the apostate ecclesiastical system pagans were received into the churches apart from regeneration by faith, and were permitted largely to retain their pagan signs and symbols.


Hence the Tau or T, in its most frequent form, with the cross-piece lowered, was adopted to stand for the cross of Christ.”\textsuperscript{123} With that, and a very detailed continuing argument, the connection of the Christian Cross with the pagan worship of false gods is clear in the eyes of the Witnesses.

The next move in the Society’s teaching is to prove veneration of the Cross to be an act of idolatry. As always, the Society uses the \textit{New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures} as the benchmark for their teaching. In reference to 1 Cor. 10:14: “My beloved ones, flee from idolatry.” (An idol is an image or symbol that is an object of intense devotion, veneration or worship.) Ex. 20:4, 5: “You shall not make yourself a carved image or any likeness …\textsuperscript{124}

To further support their position, the Society continues: “How would you feel if one of your dearest friends was executed on the basis of false charges? Would you make a replica of the instrument of execution? Would you cherish it, or would you rather shun it?”\textsuperscript{125}

By viewing the instrument of Jesus’ death in a purely negative manner, such as an instrument of execution, it is difficult to embrace the real purpose and beauty of the Cross as an instrument of redemption, healing and peace. For Anselm, the Cross was viewed as the instrument of \textit{satisfaction} for human sin against God. The Son of God became incarnate as the God-man, and possessed the ability to satisfy the human obligation by divine redemption.\textsuperscript{126}

\textsuperscript{124} Ibid., p. 92.
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid., p. 93.
The denial of the Cross, and the belief of the Witnesses that it is a symbol of false religion, serves to prevent ecumenical cooperation among the Witnesses and the mainstream Church.

**Part 3. Undeserved Kindness**

The Witnesses do not use the term *grace* in reference to the result of Jesus’ death and resurrection, or the benefits of God’s Kingdom, rather the term *undeserved kindness* is used. Compare these examples of variance in translation of the Holy Scriptures between the *New World Translation (NWT)* and the *New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)*:

**John 1:14:**

“And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.” *(NRSV)*

“So the Word became flesh and resided among us, and we had a view of his glory, a glory such as belongs to an only-begotten son from a father; and he was full of undeserved kindness and truth.” *(NWT)*

**Acts 4:33:**

“With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.” *(NRSV)*

“Also, with great power the apostles continued giving forth the witness concerning the resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and undeserved kindness in large measure was upon them all.” *(NWT)*

**Romans 1:5, 6:**

“… through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles for the sake of his name, including yourselves who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.” *(NRSV)*

“… through whom we received undeserved kindness and an apostleship in order that there might be obedience among all nations respecting his name, among which [nations] YOU also are those called to belong to Jesus Christ.” *(NWT)*
In every instance throughout Holy Scripture, the *New World Translation* replaces *grace* with *undeserved kindness*. It is important to remember that the Society has cultivated the unique language used by the Witnesses to clearly differentiate them from the Christian mainstream, and the entire world.¹²⁷

The mainstream Christian Church, and most English-language translations, use the word *grace*. For Paul the Apostle, Christians are saved by grace, not by works. Salvation does not depend on merits or achievements, but is a strictly free gift from the God of grace. Grace affirms the sheer generosity and goodness of God. “But the free gift is not like the trespass. … And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man’s sin. … but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. … those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness exercise dominion in life through … Jesus.” (Romans 5:15-17, *NRSV*)

“But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace would no longer be grace.” (Romans 11:6, *NRSV*) Strong’s Concordance notes every New Testament use of the English word *grace* as the Greek *Xa’pis, charis, khar’-ece*; *graciousness*, as in the divine influence upon the heart, and its reflection in the life; …acceptable, benefit, favour, gift, grace …¹²⁸ Perhaps a key definition for Christian understanding is *acceptable*. Humans are made acceptable to God as a benefit of God’s love. Humans are favored with the grace of God. Grace not only covers the imperfections of humans before the eyes of God, it works within the hearts of humans who open

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¹²⁷ For more on the unique language of the Witnesses, refer to the Glossary.

themselves to the presence and grace of God. The benefits of God’s graciousness are present now and for all time, and not limited to a select few.

This is a critically important viewpoint if Christians are to be effective in presenting the Gospel through inclusiveness, and build ecumenical accord among faith groups. The value of every individual is highlighted by a healthy understanding of grace as being the free gift given for all. “For God so loved the world … that everyone … may have eternal life.” (John 3:16, *NRSV*) The Baptismal Covenant contained in the *Book of Common Prayer 1979* of the Episcopal Church includes these questions and affirmations:129

*Celebrant* Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?
*People* I will, with God’s help.

*Celebrant* Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
*People* I will, with God’s help.

*Celebrant* Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?
*People* I will, with God’s help.

The effort to strive for justice and peace, and respecting the dignity of all persons cannot be achieved by separating people, especially in the name of God and Christ. The Witnesses deny the validity of the historic Church and all of the saints and martyrs of the ages. The Society demands that the Witnesses separate themselves from the world, and have no part in political or legislative reform, community outreach, ecumenical efforts, military service, or any interfaith work.

Paul the Apostle, in writing to Christians in first-century Rome declared that those persons willing to be led by the Spirit of God are children of God. “… if children, then

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heirs, heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ …” (Romans 8:14-17a, NRSV). Strong’s Concordance refers to the Greek klay-ron-om’-os, in English, heirs, as meaning getting by apportionment; a sharer by lot; an inheritor; a possessor. As heirs with Christ, there should be no favoritism between varying faith groups, provided the basis of the faith is the Lord Jesus Christ.

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Chapter 5. The Sacraments

Part 1. The Memorial Observance

Once each year on the universally recognized anniversary date of the arrest of Jesus of Nazareth, or the Jewish Passover (Nisan 14 on the Jewish Calendar), all congregations of Jehovah’s Witnesses celebrate the Memorial of Christ’s death, or as the Society refers to it, the Lord’s Evening Meal. This is the most important meeting of the year for the Witnesses. “We are specifically commanded to keep this Memorial celebration. – Luke 2:19”\(^{131}\)

The Memorial Celebration is observed at all Kingdom Halls of Jehovah’s Witnesses worldwide just after local sunset on the appointed day. There is a table, often a folding card table with a white table cloth on it, sitting centered in front of the speaker stand (podium). This is the only time a table for this purpose is present in the Kingdom Hall (there is no traditional altar in any Kingdom Hall). On the table is a clear wine glass (from a Publisher’s home), filled with kosher red wine. There is also a small china or glass plate, also from a Publisher’s home, filled with unleavened bread. The bread is a hard cracker, more like the hard-tack of the nineteenth-century. The bread is made by a Publisher and must not contain any yeast, or leavening in any form.

The observance includes a song, a public talk of about thirty-minutes in length explaining the meaning of the occasion, and an extemporaneous prayer. There is no liturgy or any of the forms of consecration familiar to the worldwide Church. There is no indication or suggestion that the elements of bread and wine ever become anything more

than a symbol of the original bread and wine used at the Lord’s last supper. Following an extemporaneous prayer, the elements are passed from one attendee to the next as they are seated in auditorium-style rows. None except the self-identified Anointed Remnant\textsuperscript{132} are allowed to partake of the elements. However, it is very important for everyone present, including infants and young children, to touch the wine glass and plate of bread.

There are no Creeds or the Lord’s Prayer used on this occasion or any other meetings of the Witnesses, and these do not appear in any of the Society’s literature. Since the Witnesses do not believe the bread and wine are anything more than symbols, they are not considered sacraments, in fact the word \textit{sacrament} is not used by the Witnesses.

Thomas Cranmer (1489-1556) explains the symbolism of Holy Communion in the Anglican tradition: “Although there be many kinds of meats and drinks which feed the body, yet our Saviour Christ ordained this sacrament of our spiritual feeding in bread and wine … because that bread and wine do most lively represent unto us the spiritual union and knot of all faithful people …”\textsuperscript{133}

The Jewish Passover Feast celebrates the events leading up to the Exodus from Egypt and the establishment of Israel. The Passover lamb was slaughtered, with the instructions to eat all of it, and leave nothing behind: “They shall eat the lamb that same night … You shall let none of it remain until morning …” (Exodus 12:8, 10 \textit{NRSV}) The act of eating the lamb symbolizes the great act of divine redemption. Alister McGrath points out the significance of the crucifixion of Jesus taking place at the feast of Passover. “The synoptic gospels clearly treat the last supper as a Passover meal, with Jesus initiating

\textsuperscript{132} For more on the Anointed Remnant, see Chapter 2, Part 3.

a new version of the meal. While Jews celebrated their deliverance by God from Egypt by eating a lamb, Christians would henceforth celebrate their deliverance by God from sin by eating bread and drinking wine.”\textsuperscript{134}

At Matthew 26:26b, Jesus is saying, “Take, eat; this is my body.” (NRSV) A majority opinion among the mainstream Christian community, especially the Roman Catholic Church, is that these words mean that, in some sense, Christ’s body is present in the bread of the Lord’s Supper. By 1215 A.D. the doctrine of transubstantiation was formalized. That understanding is that the outward appearance of the bread and wine remains unchanged, whereas its inward identity is transformed. “In other words, the bread [and wine] continue to look, taste, smell, and feel as if it were bread [and wine]; at its most fundamental level, however, it has been changed.”\textsuperscript{135}

Martin Luther developed a slightly different concept, often referred to as consubstantiation, which holds that the bread remains bread, but is additionally the body of Christ. “Luther illustrated this idea by pointing to how a piece of iron, when placed in a hot fire, becomes red hot. Although remaining iron, it has heat added to it. In the same way, the bread of the Lord’s Supper remains bread, but additionally contains or conveys the body of Christ.”\textsuperscript{136}

When John’s gospel records John the Baptist declaring Jesus Christ as “the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), the image clearly calls to mind the Passover lamb of Exodus 12. The command of Jesus to keep celebrating this event in


\textsuperscript{135} Ibid., p.161.

\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., p.162.
remembrance of his sacrifice, indicated that they were to continue *eating and drinking* the elements; literally the Body and Blood of Jesus, not simply memorializing it without actually consuming it. To fulfill the original Passover command to eat all of it, we consume all of the consecrated elements of Bread and Wine.

John Gaden (1938-1990) understood the Eucharist as the time in our fleshly lives when we pass from death to life. Christ is sacrificed for us, and Christ is our life. “Taste and see how gracious the Lord is. We feed on, and are made strong in Him. Christ is our peace, who makes us one. We receive the Bread and the Wine, and feel his touch. We touch each other and know we are together in Christ.”137

Through the ages, Christians have developed different names for the celebration and remembrance of the Last Supper. The term *Eucharist* derives from the Greek verb *eucharistein*, meaning *a thanksgiving*. The term *Mass* comes from the Latin word *missa*, literally meaning *a service of some sort*. The phrase *Holy Communion* points to the idea of *fellowship* or *sharing*. The *Lord’s Supper* picks up on the theme of a *memorial* of the last supper.138

To not partake of the elements of the Eucharist is to deny the power of the event, both historically and in real-time. No faithful Hebrew would have left any of the Passover lamb uneaten, or properly burned after the meal (Exodus 12:10), indicating great respect for every part of the sacrificial animal. Likewise, every part of the consecrated Bread and Wine of the Eucharist is to be consumed or properly returned to the earth.


In the Episcopal Eucharistic liturgy, the invitation to the table is given with the words, “The Gifts of God for the People of God. Take them in remembrance that Christ died for you, and feed on him in your hearts by faith, with thanksgiving.”

If the elements of Bread and Wine are not actually taken into the body, the act of feeding on Christ is eliminated. In this case, the remembrance is incomplete, in that we cannot fully partake of the Passover fulfillment unless we partake of the precious Body and Blood that made redemption possible.

This factor prevents the Witnesses from engaging in ecumenical accord with any Christian organization that properly observes the Lord’s Supper in its various forms, as accepted by the mainstream Christian community.

**Part 2. Believers Baptism**

For the Society and the Witnesses, only persons who have been participating in a Home Bible Study and regularly associating with the congregation can be considered for baptism in the Organization. It is assumed that a person studying with the Witnesses and regularly attending and participating in the work of the ministry in the local congregation would seek baptism, and in preparation, radically change his or her lifestyle to conform to the new standard:

As the Bible student makes good progress, he will conform his way of life to Jehovah’s righteous standards and … [be a] person who is demonstrating in this way that he really wants to become one of Jehovah’s Witnesses … At that time he may obtain his own copy of *Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry* and begin to review the material in the Appendix starting on page 175.

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The text goes on to explain that all of the questions for baptism can be answered from the scripture references given; all from the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures. It is important to remember that the NWT is markedly different from all other translations of Holy Scripture, and this must always be taken into account when comparing Scriptural references.

Every baptized publisher within the Watchtower Organization bears equal responsibility as ministers of the good news, in imitation of God’s Chief Minister, Jesus, to make whatever changes may be required in their lives to be acceptable to Jehovah God and potentially be received into the New System of things.

Having come to Jesus, therefore, in response to his invitation to follow him, we have been blessed with knowledge of Jehovah God and of Jesus Christ. (John 17:3) We have been taught Jehovah’s ways. With his help we have been able to make over our mind, change our personality and harmonize our daily conduct with Jehovah’s righteous standards. (Rom. 12:1, 2; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:9, 10) … Our baptism in water is a symbol of our dedication to Jehovah and constitutes our ordination as ministers.141

The Witnesses do not practice infant baptism. Much of the mainstream Christian Church, and particularly the Roman Catholic and Anglican traditions do. Perhaps it could be said that infant baptism is a gift of God to a person that has no idea God exists; a love and grace that is so fundamental that parents and sponsors present their precious children to God in the act of baptism, preferably performed in community. In the Book of Common Prayer 1979, the Service of Holy Baptism includes this question to the parents and godparents of the infant being baptized: “Will you be responsible for seeing that the child

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141 Watch Tower Committee, Organized to Accomplish Our Ministry (New York: Watch Tower, 1983), pp. 82-83.
you present is brought up in the Christian faith?”, followed by the response, “I will, with God’s help”.

This act of the faith community affirms the covenant initiated by God and sealed with the Blood of Christ, and brings the community together in support of the baptized person. As the baptized infant grows to an age of understanding, they are offered education in the historic faith and encouraged to affirm their baptism at Confirmation. The prayer at Confirmation, Reception, and Affirmation includes the words: “Renew in these your servants the covenant you made with them at their Baptism. Send them forth in the power of that Spirit to perform the service you set before them …”

Part 3. Disfellowshipping

The Watchtower Society and the Witnesses do not hear confession in a traditionally-accepted manner. If an individual member of the congregation confesses to an Elder, Ministerial Servant or another publisher, the person hearing the confession is required to report it to the Body of Elders for appropriate action to be taken:

Some cases of wrongdoing may be brought to the attention of the overseers by individual brothers or sisters who report unresolved personal grievances. (Matt. 18:17) On the other hand, the elders may be approached by individuals who either confess their own sins or report what they know regarding the wrongdoing of others. (Jas. 5:16; Lev. 5:1) But regardless of the exact manner in which the elders first hear reports of serious wrongdoing on the part of a baptized member of the congregation, an initial investigation will be made. If it is established that there is substance to the report and evidence is produced showing serious sin actually may have been committed, the congregation’s body of elders will assign a judicial committee of at least three brothers to handle the matter. In the case of reported

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143 Ibid., p.309.
serious wrongdoing on the part of one who is regularly associated but not yet baptized, similar steps will be taken.\textsuperscript{144 vii}

It is the responsibility of every baptized Witness, according to the Society, to inform the congregation elders of any actual or suspected wrongdoing on the part of any other Witness or approved associate. How does the Society define wrongdoing?

The definitions of sin for the Witnesses are rooted in the Old Testament Law Covenant. Disputes between individual Witnesses are also a form of sin for the Witnesses. If one Witness offends another or perhaps takes undue advantage of another, this is a minor sin and can be settled between the individuals. If the wrongdoer refuses to accept Scriptural advice to make amends, the matter can then be taken to the elders for resolution.

*Serious offenses* are defined in broad terms that are interpreted by the Society in the most restrictive and provincial tone. The Witnesses are deeply entrenched in a judicial mentality in their internal government as a result of a like understanding of God and Holy Scripture. The *Organization* book explains:

Where the sinner accepts reproof, seeks forgiveness and straightens the matter out, Jesus states there is no need to carry the matter further. This fact shows that, although serious, the offenses here discussed were limited in nature to such as could be settled between the individuals involved. This would not include such offenses as fornication, adultery, homosexuality, blasphemy, apostasy, idolatry and similar gross sins that should be reported to the elders and handled by them. When the Law covenant was in force, these sins required more than forgiveness from an offended individual. – 1. Cor. 6:9, 10; Gal. 5:19-21.\textsuperscript{145}

… if a serious sin is involved so that it would be wrong just to let it pass, then you should report the matter to the overseers of the congregation. If upon investigation it should become evident to the shepherds of the flock that the brother has indeed committed a serious sin against you and yet has been unwilling to repent and make the appropriate amends, it may become necessary for the


\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., p. 143.
overseers to expel the unrepentant wrongdoer and in that way protect the flock and safeguard the cleanness of the congregation. – Matt. 18:17.146

The Society offers a deeper understanding of how the Witnesses are expected to define sin, and determine the significance of serious sin in the section of the Questions for Those Desiring to be Baptized, under the heading, Christian Law. The future baptized publisher first is reminded that their knowledge of the Truth requires them to make changes in their life: “Responding to what you learned may have entailed a number of adjustments in your attitude toward life itself and in your personal conduct.” However, making changes in your life is not considered sacred service, “Rather, Jehovah God accepts sacred service only from those whose lives have been made to reflect his righteousness.”147

The Organization book goes on to define conduct unbecoming of a Christian as: lying, stealing, abuse of alcohol, non-medical use of drugs, use of tobacco and its components, fornication, adultery, homosexuality and other unlawful sexual conduct, gambling, idolatry, interfaith148, celebration of holidays, military service, and anything even remotely related to any of these.149 Any of these transgressions may result in the disapproval of Jehovah and result in disfellowshipping.

The Society teaches that every wrongdoer is to be counseled by the elders to recognize their guilt and to demonstrate true repentance (2 Tim. 4:1, 2 NWT). The wrongdoer is expected to produce works that befit repentance (Acts 26:20 NWT).


147 Ibid., p. 191.

148 Refer to the Glossary for the definition of Interfaith, a term unique to the Witnesses.

However, the wrongdoer may have become hardened in his course of wrong conduct and fail to respond to the efforts of his brothers to help him…. In such cases it would be necessary for the responsible elders to expel the unrepentant wrongdoer from the congregation, thus denying him fellowship with Jehovah’s clean congregation. This would be done to protect other members of the congregation from the bad influence of the wrongdoer, safeguarding the moral and spiritual cleanliness of the congregation and protecting its good name. (Deut. 17:6; 1 Tim. 5:19)\textsuperscript{150}

The Society goes on to describe an appeal period that lasts no more than one-week. If exercised, the appeal leads to a Special Committee of elders from other congregations to review the case. If the Special Committee does not overturn the decision of the congregation committee, or the wrongdoer does not exercise the appeal process, the elders move forward with disfellowshipping.

When it becomes necessary to remove an unrepentant wrongdoer from the congregation, a brief announcement is made, simply stating that the person has been disfellowshipped. There is no need to say more. This will alert the faithful congregation to stop associating with that person. – 1 Cor. 5:11\textsuperscript{151}

If a disfellowshipped person shows signs of repentance, they must continue to live lives worthy of Jehovah’s kingdom for at least one-year, after which the repentant wrongdoer can submit a letter requesting reinstatement. The original judicial committee that exercised the power to disfellowship must be the same committee that agrees to reinstate.

When the judicial committee is convinced that the disfellowshipped person is genuinely repentant and should be reinstated, an announcement of the reinstatement is made, mentioning also any restrictions that apply until the person has regained a measure of spiritual strength.\textsuperscript{152}


\textsuperscript{151} Ibid., p. 148.

\textsuperscript{152} Ibid., pp. 149-150.
In the case of unbaptized approved associates in the congregation, the act of disfellowshipping does not apply. In these cases, an announcement is made that this person is no longer an approved associate. “The congregation will then view the wrongdoer as they would view one who has been disfellowshipped. (1 Cor. 15:33)”\textsuperscript{153}

The Witnesses practice only believers’ baptism, and will baptize anyone 12-years or older, provided the individual can demonstrate a clear understanding of, and agreement with, the \textit{Questions for Those Desiring to be Baptized}, found in the book \textit{Organized to Accomplish our Ministry}.\textsuperscript{154} In the event a baptized person who is also a legal minor falls into wrongdoing, the procedure is not much different from the treatment of adult offenders:

When the elders investigate and handle cases of serious sins where a minor is involved, it would be good if the dedicated parents of the young person would be present and cooperate with the elders acting in a judicial capacity, not attempting to shield the erring child from necessary disciplinary action … However, if the young person is unrepentant, disfellowshipping action would be taken.\textsuperscript{155}

Even when no proof of wrongdoing is evident or suspected, any person that proves to be disorderly, that is, refuses to submit to theocratic order, can be marked by the elders. The Society refers to Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonian Christians as a reason for exercising this power; “…to withdraw from every brother walking disorderly and not according to the tradition you received from us” (2 Thess. 3:6 \textit{NWT}).

Occasionally, in the congregation today, there may be those who, although not known to be guilty of practicing a grave sin for which they could be expelled, nevertheless continue to display flagrant disregard for theocratic order.

After giving repeated admonitions to such individuals and finding that they persist in disregarding well-established Bible principles, the elders may decide to


\textsuperscript{154} Ibid., pp. 175-218.

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., p. 151
speak to the congregation and give appropriate admonitions concerning such disorderly conduct. Even though no name has been mentioned, individual members of the congregation would then be obliged to ‘mark’ a person, or persons, of that kind, just as Paul advised the brothers in Thessalonica … When it is clearly evident that the individual has abandoned his disorderly course, it would no longer be necessary to treat him as a ‘marked’ individual.156

The reason the Society gives for taking such action is based on maintaining Jehovah’s protection over the Organization and the congregations:

By our maintaining fine conduct as ministers of God’s good news and by our example of Christian unity, the Kingdom truth will continue to shine forth through us. With Jehovah’s blessing we will have the joy of seeing many more people come to know Jehovah and join us in fully accomplishing the ministry. (Ps. 23; Isa. 32:1, 2).157

The English word sin derives from the Greek hamarti’a, from hamartan’o; to miss the mark; faults, offences, trespasses, sin.158 The archery metaphor leads the reader to understand sin, not as an unredeemable act, but simply as a lack of perfection. A rookie archer misses the mark, the bulls’ eye, but is not rejected. She is rather taught and practiced toward perfection.

The early Christian Church was concerned with victory over sin; the ultimate enemy of humanity. Imperfection was the dividing factor between God and humans. Christ’s death, resurrection, and triumph over death opened the gates of heaven to all believers.159

The universality of sin is either stated explicitly or assumed throughout the Bible (Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Ps. 14:2). In Jesus’ teaching, this universality is implicit (Matt. 7:11; 12:34; Mark 8:38; etc.), but in Paul it is quite explicit (Rom. 3:9, 22). This leads to the question of the origin of sin. Genesis 3 records the first act of disobedience, but does not say that this was the cause of all subsequent badness. The imperfection inherited through *hamarti’a* is defeated in Christ, and all humans are redeemed by His sacrifice. The rest of the human condition appears to be affected by free will.¹⁶⁰

The rejection or disfellowshipping of persons from the Church as a result of the judgments of others, in the name of God, does not serve to build-up the body of Christ. Rather, it serves to drive individuals away from the love and grace of God.

CONCLUSION – Is Ecumenical Accord Possible?

For the Witnesses, no association with any other religious organization is allowed; it is regarded as a serious sin called *interfaith*. The exclusivity of the call to follow Jehovah God requires complete separation from all other religious groups. Included in the *Questions for Those Desiring to be Baptized* is this explanation of interfaith:

*Would it be proper for true Christians to share in worship with other religious groups?*

I heard another voice out of heaven say: “Get out of her, my people, if you do not want to share with her in her sins, and if you do not want to receive part of her plagues. For her sins have massed together clear up to heaven, and God has called her acts of injustice to mind.” — Rev. 18:4, 5. (*NWT*)

Additional references: 1 Cor. 10:20; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; Matt. 7:13, 14, 21-23; 2 Tim. 3:2, 5; Numbers 25:1, 2.

*Optional questions for discussion:* (a) What are some examples of interfaith activity that true Christians should avoid? (b) Why would a person have to make sure that he has cut off all association with false religious organizations before presenting himself for baptism as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses? (c) What would this include?  

No answers are printed for the Optional Questions; these are left to interpretation according to the other teachings of the Society, and the *New World Translation*. Notice the question above, “Why would a person have to make sure that he has cut off all association with false religious organizations before presenting himself for baptism as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses?” The requirement to “cut off association with false religious organizations” includes all of the parts of Christendom, as well as any other religious group whatsoever. This requirement alone prohibits the Witnesses from working cooperatively with other religious groups in civic and community efforts to support social justice.

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As for ecumenical efforts in missionary service, the only definition the Witnesses have for missionary service is to spread the Truth, known only to Jehovah’s Witnesses, to distant or remote parts of the world. These efforts do not include offering aid to persons not associated with the Witnesses. The Society does not support missionary efforts to build public schools or provide clean water to villages; only the building of new Kingdom Halls. It is important to remember that the Witnesses believe the world, or system of things, as we know it will be destroyed, so why build-up something that is already sentenced to destruction?

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16, NRSV) The phrase everyone who believes in him does not encourage separation among Christians, rather a joining-together of all persons who proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. By acceptance of this Christian principle, we are acknowledging the power of the Body and Blood of Jesus to unite all people in His Name, not separate them.

The unique beliefs of the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Watchtower Society prevent any form of ecumenical accord between the Witnesses and the mainstream Christian community. The Society’s teaching against the doctrine of the Trinity, the meaning and practice of the Lord’s Supper, the belief that God has chosen the Watch Tower Society and the Jehovah’s Witnesses as the only voice of truth, and the prohibition against any form of ecumenical activity, conclusively separate the Witnesses from all other groups claiming the name, Christian. And that is what the Witnesses are instructed to do; to be completely separate from the world at large, and everything in it.
Dispensationalism is a theological system that teaches biblical history as best understood in light of a number of successive administrations of God’s dealings with humankind, which it calls “Dispensations.”

As a system, dispensationalism is expounded in the writings of John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) and the Plymouth Brethren Movement, and propagated through publications such as Cyrus Scofield’s Scofield Reference Bible. The theology of dispensationalism consists of a distinctive eschatological end times perspective, as all dispensationalists hold to premillennialism and most hold to a pretribulation rapture.

With the rise of dispensationalism, some conservative Protestants came to interpret elements of the Book of Revelation not as account of past events (with specific reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, a position known as Preterism) but as predictions of the future.*

*Craig A. Blaising; Darrell L. Bock, Progressive Dispensationalism (Wheaton; Bridgepoint, 1993).

The Watchtower Society teaches that the pre-human Jesus was actually the Archangel Michael. They point out that Michael is not often mentioned in Scripture, but when he is mentioned, he is in action. In the Book of Daniel, Michael is battling wicked angels; in the letter of Jude, he is disputing with the Devil and his demons. The Society argues that often in Scripture individuals are known by more than one name: Jacob was also known as Israel, and Peter was also known as Simon. (Referencing Genesis 49:1,2 and Matthew 10:2 NWT)

Archangel. God’s Word refers to Michael “the archangel.” (Jude 9) This term means “chief angel.” Notice that Michael is called the archangel. This suggests that there is only one such angel. In fact, the term “archangel” occurs in the Bible only in the singular, never in the plural. Moreover, Jesus is linked with the office of archangel. Regarding the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ, 1 Thessalonians 4:16 states: “The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a commanding call, with an archangel’s voice.” Thus the voice of Jesus is described as being that of an archangel. This scripture therefore suggests that Jesus himself is the archangel Michael.* [Quoting the New World Translation]


It is interesting to note the differences in translation of 1 Thessalonians 4:16 in the New Revised Standard Version: “For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call and the sound of God’s trumpet, will descend from heaven, and the dead in Christ will rise first.” (NRSV) It seems more likely the Scripture is claiming the
archangel’s voice is announcing the arrival of the Lord Jesus, not that it is the voice of Jesus himself as archangel.

iii John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) was born in Westminster, England and educated at Westminster School and Trinity College, Dublin. He was ordained a priest in the Church of Ireland in 1826. Though he embraced Christianity, there is no evidence that he formally studied theology. As a curate in the Church of Ireland parish of Delgany, County Wicklow, he distinguished himself by convincing Roman Catholic peasants in the Calary area to abandon the Catholic Church. In October 1827, Darby became convinced the kingdom of God described in the Book of Isaiah and elsewhere in the Old Testament was entirely different from the Christian church.

Darby developed a mature theology that included the conviction that the very notion of a clergyman was a sin against the Holy Spirit, because it limited the recognition that the Holy Spirit could speak through any member of the Church. Together with Anthony Norris Groves, Edward Cronin, J.G. Bellett, and Francis Hutchinson, Darby formed the movement known as the Plymouth Brethren. Darby is noted in the theological world as the father of dispensationalism, later made popular in the United States by Cyrus Scofield’s *Scofield Reference Bible.*

*Charles Spurgeon, *Mr. Grant on “The Darby Brethren”* (Dublin; Sword and Trowel, 1869) and, James Grant, *The Plymouth Brethren: Their History and Heresies* (London; Macintosh, 1875).

iv The Witnesses and the Society have throughout their history proclaimed the belief that God’s true people, the Jehovah’s Witnesses would suffer persecution at the hands of the wicked world, similar to the persecution perpetrated against the first and second-century Christians. Among the recent published accounts of perceived persecution is this excerpt from the Watchtower Magazine of May 2011, detailing events in Russia:

In December 2009 and January 2010, two of the highest courts in Russia declared the religious faith of the Jehovah’s Witnesses to be extremist. History seemed to be repeating itself. When the Soviets ruled Russia, thousands of Witnesses were wrongly charged with being enemies of the nation. They were exiled, sent to prisons, and forced into labor camps. After that regime collapsed, Jehovah’s Witnesses were exonerated. The new government officially restored their good name. Now, once again, some people seem determined to slander the Witnesses.

Early in 2009, the authorities launched an attack on the religious freedom of Jehovah’s Witnesses. In February alone, prosecutors carried out more than 500 investigations across the country. The goal of this campaign? To identify supposed violations of the law by the Witnesses. In the following months, the police raided peaceful religious meetings held in Kingdom Halls and private homes. The authorities deported foreign lawyers who were assisting in the Witnesses’ defense and barred them from reentering the country.*
The article goes on to highlight the brave work of the Witnesses to continue spreading the good news despite the dangers of arrest and increased persecution. The persecution-mentality is very deeply ingrained in the Witnesses mentality and interpretation of future events.

The 2015 Yearbook includes renderings of the expansion project and photos of the current progress. The new facilities will total over 200,000 square feet, in addition to four residence buildings with a total of 578 rooms. The Bethel Home will include an auditorium and dining room, each seating 1,100, an infirmary, kitchen, laundry, and a visitors museum. The Maintenance Building will include workshops, a powerhouse, and enclosed parking. These new facilities, as well as the current factories and farms owned and operated by the Society are self-contained cities, capable of going off-grid at any time.*

The term Christendom always carries a negative connotation in the Witnesses’ language and understanding. The Watchtower Society’s book, Isaiah’s Prophecy II, includes an explanation of the parallel between Christendom and the “unrighteousness and violence in Judah”, referring to apostate Jerusalem as a picture all of the historical and present-day churches of Christendom: “Down to the present, Christendom’s form of religion has proved powerless to stop ethnic cleansing and intertribal slaughter among their own members.” (citing 2 Timothy 3:5) The Society even connects war and violence to the universal church by stating: “Although Jesus taught his followers to trust in God’s Kingdom, the nations of Christendom continue to rely for security on military arsenals and political alliances. Indeed, most of the world’s major arms producers are found in the nations of Christendom!”* With the latter statement, the Society ties the “nations” and Christendom together as if they are one unit.

GLOSSARY OF WATCHTOWER SOCIETY TERMS

Among the Watchtower Society and the Witnesses there is a unique language underlying all of their doctrine, practice and personal communications. As an example of how differently the Witnesses view themselves and their beliefs and practices in comparison to mainstream Christian groups, here is a brief comparative glossary of common terms. The terms in the left column are not used by the Society or the Witnesses, and have been replaced with the words and phrases in the right column:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mainstream Christianity</th>
<th>Watchtower Society</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Choir</td>
<td>(not used)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Church</td>
<td>Kingdom Hall</td>
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<td>Body and Blood</td>
<td>Bread and Wine</td>
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<td>Sermon</td>
<td>Public Talk</td>
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<td>Hymn</td>
<td>Song</td>
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<td>Hymnal</td>
<td>Songbook</td>
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<td>Preacher</td>
<td>Speaker</td>
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<td>Service</td>
<td>Meeting</td>
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<td>Offering</td>
<td>Contribution</td>
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<td>Communion</td>
<td>Memorial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pulpit</td>
<td>Speaker Stand or Podium</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lectionary</td>
<td>Meeting Schedule</td>
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<td>Daily Devotional</td>
<td>Yearbook</td>
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<td>Members</td>
<td>Publishers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clergy</td>
<td>Elder/Ministerial Servant</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parsonage</td>
<td>(none)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sacraments</td>
<td>(none)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holy Spirit</td>
<td>Active Force</td>
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<td>Grace</td>
<td>Undeserved Kindness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cross</td>
<td>Torture Stake</td>
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<tr>
<td>Doctrine</td>
<td>Teaching</td>
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</table>

Below is a sampling of the major terms used by the Witnesses in their communication and understanding of their beliefs and practices. These terms and their meanings are based on my nearly 30 years as a Witness, including service as a Ministerial Servant (Deacon), and the publications of the Watchtower Society. Although many of
these words and phrases may seem mundane to most of us, for the Witnesses, these often have unique meanings in their everyday conversations, and in some cases, even deeper emotional implications:

**Armageddon.** The day when Jehovah God will exact judgment and eternal destruction on everyone not in good standing as a Publisher in the Watchtower Organization. All people not associated with the Society are doomed, without exception.

**Awake Magazine.** A religious news magazine, offered as a companion to the *Watchtower Magazine*, published by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society. Each story is designed to introduce Watchtower doctrine exclusively.

**Bethel Service.** The New York Headquarters is also referred to as Bethel (Hebrew: House of God). Young men and women, baptized Publishers in good standing, are encouraged to apply for a period of service at Bethel, mainly working in the printing facilities of the Watchtower. There are major printing facilities in Brooklyn, New York and Walkill, New York. Bethel Servants receive housing, personal supplies, clothing, meals and a small allowance.

**Book Bag.** This phrase carries special meaning in that a Publisher’s Book Bag is used only for the door-to-door ministry.

**Book Servant.** This is the Elder or Ministerial Servant responsible for ordering books and magazines from New York Headquarters, then distributing to the Publishers and collecting the donations. The funds are given to the Congregation Secretary for transmittal to the Society.

**Brothers/Sisters.** Other Witnesses are referred to as Brother or Sister, or the generic *Friends*. Only Witnesses can be called by these titles, never anyone outside of the Organization.

**Car Group(s).** Groups of two or more, normally no more than four that join together and share a vehicle for the day of door-to-door witnessing.

**Circuit Convention; Circuit Assembly.** A semi-annual meeting of several congregations in a geographic area. Usually held at Society-owned Assembly Halls, seating 700-1500 persons. Assembly Halls are equipped with full kitchens and dining rooms capable of feeding capacity audiences, 2-3 meals a day for 2-3 days. Each Assembly Hall will host several Circuits of congregations.
**Congregation.** Always refers to a Kingdom Hall. No other church or group qualifies for this description.

**Congregation Secretary.** The male Elder responsible for transmitting donations and reports to the Headquarters in New York.

**Comment.** When a question is asked in one of the Studies, the answer is called a Comment. Comments are always expected to be taken directly from the study material, and be within the accepted doctrinal standards of the Watchtower Society. There is no room for personal interpretation, and this is not the time for questions or critical thought.

**Committee Meeting.** A group of male Elders, normally three, convened to discuss an issue of importance to the congregation. Most of these are formed as Judicial Committees.

**Devil-Worshipper; Devil-Worshipping.** Any religious act, practice, belief or person not originating with the Watchtower Society, without exception.

**Disfellowship; Disfellowshipping; Disfellowshipped.** Total removal from fellowship with the congregation, the Society, and all faithful family members. Faithful Publishers are strictly instructed to shun the disfellowshipped person and the persons family members are held to the same standard, even if they live in the same house.

**District Convention; District Assembly.** A large convention of numerous congregations, often held at a major sports stadium and lasting several days. This is when new books are released by the Watchtower Society.

**Donation.** The monies received by Publishers for the magazines and books offered in the door-to-door ministry.

**Elders.** The male Publishers in good standing that have been screened and qualified as leaders in the local congregation. There is no paid staff at any Kingdom Hall anywhere in the world. All Elders, Ministerial Servants and Publishers are volunteers.

**Faithful.** Abiding by all Society doctrine, without exception. Regular in the door-to-door ministry, with a minimum average hours equal to or greater than the national average hours.

**Fell Away; Fall Away.** No longer associating with the Witnesses by a person’s own choice, but not disfellowshipped. Often a Witness will stop attending meetings, participating in the door-to-door ministry, and associating with the Witnesses without admitting wrongdoing, and not being accused of wrongdoing.
Field Ministry. The door-to-door ministry the Witnesses are best known for. This practice became mandatory for all baptized Publishers under the leadership of Nathan Knorr, the third President of the Watchtower Society.

Field Service Meeting. A brief meeting where the daily reading from the Yearbook is discussed by the Witnesses before leaving for door-to-door ministry. In recent years the Yearbook has been reduced to an Annual Report and the daily readings are published separately.

Field Service Overseer; Field Service Servant. The Elder that manages the distribution of territories for door-to-door ministry and collects the monthly Field Service Reports, then transmits the congregation total report to the Society in New York.

Good News. The unique message presented by the Society and the Witnesses. Any time scripture mentions the Good News, the Witnesses hear that as meaning the message presented by the Watchtower.

Good Standing. A Publisher is in Good Standing with the Organization (Society, Watchtower) if they are regular and participating in all meetings and the door-to-door ministry at a level equal-to or greater-than the national average (US).

Governing Body. The group of thirteen (13) men that control the doctrine, writings, music and laws of the Society. Everything published by the Watchtower Society is written by these men. All rules of the Society and doctrinal beliefs are dictated by these men who are assumed to be in direct communication with almighty God. The Witnesses believe that no other group anywhere on earth, past, present, or future, is directed by God with the exception of the Governing Body.

Home Bible Study. Offered by the Witnesses to anyone that purchases a book or magazine and expresses an interest in Society doctrine. Home Bible Studies are held once each week in the home of the interested person. The first book studied is designed to gently introduce the newly-interested person in continuing in increased fellowship with the Witnesses and attendance at Kingdom Hall meetings.

Householder. Any person that answers the door when the Witnesses knock. This person is often described on the Territory Report.

Inactive List. A list of Publishers that have not submitted a Field Service Report for a period of time, normally 3-6 months. An Inactive Publisher cannot be assigned parts in the meetings or studies at the Kingdom Hall or in the homes of other Witnesses.
**Interfaith.** Any Witness that attends church services or activities apart from that of the Kingdom Hall, or participates in any cooperative activity with any other faith group is practicing interfaith. Unless repentant, the offender may face disfellowshipping. *Interfaith* is one of the *serious sins* requiring Judicial Committee action.

**Judicial Committee.** A group of Elders, normally three, convened for the purpose of deciding punishment for any Publisher in the local congregation that fails to adhere to Society doctrine. Any Publisher not following the instruction of the Organization is presumed to be unfaithful to Jehovah God, and subject to disfellowshipping.

**Kingdom Hall.** The meeting places of Jehovah’s Witnesses. The term, *church*, is never used.

**Last Days.** The time beginning in 1914 and continuing until the Day of Armageddon.

**Meeting.** A gathering of Witnesses at the Kingdom Hall for the purpose of study and practice (rehearsal) of presentations to be made in the door-to-door ministry. The word, *service*, is never used.

**Ministry Meeting.** Normally the second half of the Thursday Night Meeting, and may be held on another evening, depending on location. This part of the meeting is when the local Elders present the latest understanding of Society doctrine.

**Ministry School.** Normally the first half of the Thursday Night Meeting, and may be held on another night, depending on location. This part of the meeting is used for rehearsal of presentations given in the door-to-door ministry.

**Ministry School Report.** Similar to a report card in public school. The subjects listed are designed to prepare the Publisher for the door-to-door ministry. Publishers are graded as Satisfactory, or Needs Improvement.

**Missionary.** Refers only to Witnesses that are serving in foreign countries, but never anyone outside of the Organization. All others calling themselves missionaries are unbelievers and pagan devil worshippers.

**New System; New World; New Order.** The new Theocratic government made-up of only Witnesses and governing only Witnesses here on earth after Armageddon. Everyone not in good standing with the Organization will have been destroyed before the New System takes over the earth for eternity. Only faithful Witnesses will be alive on earth at that time.
New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (NWT). The unique translation/version of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures first released in 1961, revised in 1981 and 2013. The Translation Committee is un-named and is made-up of only members of the Governing Body. The differences in this translation/version from all other Christian translations/versions are striking.

New York Headquarters. The corporation offices and main printing facilities of the Watchtower Society in Brooklyn, New York (USA). The Society owns large properties in Brooklyn, including the historic Tower Hotel, large printing facilities, and marine shipping docks.

Old System; Old World; Old Order. The entire world as governed by earthly governments. All earthly governments are assumed to be in opposition with Jehovah God and His chosen Organization. Anything outside of the Kingdom Hall and the Organization is the World, and is doomed, without exception.

Organization. The Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, the Governing Body and the local Kingdom Halls.

Pioneer(s); Pioneering. A person promising to spend a minimum of 60-120 hours per month in the door-to-door ministry is called a Pioneer.

Placed. A book or magazine is considered Placed when it is left in the door of a home where no one answers the door, or when a householder accepts the printed materials for a donation.

Presentation. The rehearsed approach used in door-to-door ministry. Presentations are learned and practiced at the weekly Service Meetings at the Kingdom Hall.

Presiding Overseer. The Elder-in-Charge of the local congregation. This is a non-paid responsibility.

Public Reproof. A practice used at the local Kingdom Halls to inform the congregation of the sin of a member. This practice is believed to protect the rest of the congregation from hidden sin, and give the faithful Witnesses the opportunity to shepherd the errant Witness back to good standing in the congregation.

Return Visits. Refers to the Witnesses going back to the home of someone that accepted literature on a previous visit. Return visits often result in a Home Bible Study.
Sisters/Brothers. The common way Witnesses refer to each other. Another common term used when referring to other Witnesses is friends.

Service Meeting. A weekly meeting where door-to-door presentations are learned and rehearsed. Each presentation is practiced in front of the congregation and is graded by the Field Service Overseer using a guide provided by the Society.

Society. The shortened term for the Watchtower Society of New York, Inc.

Speaker Stand; Podium. The term is used in the place of the word pulpit.

Spiritually Dead. Describes anyone not in Jehovah’s favor. Anyone not associating with the Witnesses and practicing their specific teachings and practices is referred to as spiritually dead, which is equal to physical death at the future Armageddon.

Territory; Territories. The areas surrounding a local congregation that are divided into smaller maps that can be covered in the door-to-door ministry and the results tracked. Territories are normally completed every six months.

Territory Report. A report form used by the Witness managing the door-to-door ministry in any given territory. This report can include information on every home or property in the territory and are kept on-file at the local congregation.

Truth; The Truth. The teachings of the Watchtower Society are referred to as the only truth as revealed strictly to the Witnesses by Jehovah God. Any beliefs other than those of the Witnesses is referred to as pagan and false.

Unassigned Territory; Unassigned Territories. Parts of the world, including rural areas in the United States, where there is no local congregation. The door-to-door ministry work in these areas is shared by several congregations, often travelling long distances to perform this ministry.

Unbeliever. Refers to anyone, including mainstream Christians, who do not adopt the teachings of the Society.

World; The World. Refers to everything outside or apart from the Kingdom Hall and fellowship with the Society. This term is always used in the negative form by the Witnesses.

Worldly. When someone ignores the teachings of the Society and does not live according to Witness teachings, they are referred to as worldly. Anything not approved by the Society is referred to a worldly.
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