A People Waiting for Salvation: a Biblical Evaluation of Watchtower Christology and Soteriology With Suggested Strategies for the Evangelization of Jehovah's Witnesses

Jose Carlos Ramos

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A PEOPLE WAITING FOR SALVATION: A BIBLICAL EVALUATION OF WATCHTOWER CHRISTOLOGY AND SOTERIOLOGY WITH SUGGESTED STRATEGIES FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

Andrews University

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A Project Report
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Ministry

by
José Carlos Ramos
February 1984
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20 Feb 1984
Date approved

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ABSTRACT

A PEOPLE WAITING FOR SALVATION: A BIBLICAL EVALUATION OF WATCHTOWER CHRISTOLOGY AND SOTERIOLOGY WITH SUGGESTED STRATEGIES FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES

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José Carlos Ramos

Chairman: Nancy Vyhmester
This project explores biblical Christology and Soteriology and compares the findings of the study with the position of the Watchtower Society on these two doctrines. Since Watchtower teachings are found to be at variance with the biblical view and cannot rightly be called Christian, Jehovah's Witnesses are in need of evangelization.

Christianity is both revelation and religion. The revelation of God and of His divine Son is, in and of itself, only part of Christianity. There needs to be the human response—religion—to the lordship of Jesus Christ. This combination of revelation and the response of faith, obedience, and commitment constitute
Christianity. However, since without the revelation of Christ there could be no response, Christ must be considered the essence and very center of Christianity, not merely its founder.

In order to appreciate the centrality of Christ, one must study His person, nature, and work. The divine-human nature of Christ, enigmatic as it may seem, is a biblical fact and is well documented in historical Christianity. Other aspects of Christ's life that set him apart from any other being and make him alone capable of saving human beings are incarnation, sinlessness, and substitutionary death. Finally, without the resurrection, nothing of what Christians believe about Christ could be true.

An examination of the Watchtower teachings regarding Christ indicates that Jehovah's Witnesses have a different understanding of Jesus and His work from that taught by the Bible and reaffirmed by Christian theology. Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Christ is not wholly divine, his death is not sufficient for total redemption of the human family, his resurrection was not bodily, and his merits are not sufficient to insure the salvation of all—human merits must be added. A study of Johannine passages used by Jehovah's Witnesses to discredit the divine preexistence of Christ serves to reaffirm the traditional Christian position.

Because Jehovah's Witnesses do not accept the biblical revelation of Christ nor respond to him as absolute Lord and Savior, they are in need of receiving the Gospel. However, this witness should appeal not only to the mind but also to the heart.

Antagonism and censure are not appropriate to witnessing. Therefore, specific instructions regarding how to conduct debates
are given for pastors and laypersons. In all cases, the exaltation of the divine Christ whose life and death are all-sufficient for salvation is to be the essence of evangelization of Jehovah's Witnesses.
DEDICATION

To my wife Elda, and my children Jarlan, Elmara, and Jaider, Jesus' witnesses with me along the years, this study is affectionately dedicated.
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ABBREVIATIONS

AB - The Anchor Bible
CGTSC - Cambridge Greek Testament for Schools and Colleges
ICC - The International Critical Commentary
KJV - King James Version of the Bible
MLB - Modern Language Bible
MNTC - The Moffat New Testament Commentary
Moffat - The Holy Bible - A New Translation by James Moffat
NAB - New American Bible (Catholic edition)
NCBC - New Century Bible Commentary
NEB - The New English Bible
NICNT - The New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIV - The New International Version of the Bible
NT - New Testament
NWT - New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures
OT - Old Testament
SDABC - Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary

Unless otherwise indicated, Bible quotations are from the Revised Standard Version (1952, 1971).
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Above all, I acknowledge my indebtedness to the triune God, through whom all things are possible, for his constant love and sustaining help.
INTRODUCTION

Justification of the Project

The development of this project was especially motivated by the conviction that Jehovah's Witnesses constitute an evangelistic challenge for Seventh-day Adventists today. Two major aspects are pointed out: the first is essentially missionary and assumes that Jehovah's Witnesses are lost and must be reached by the Gospel—this requires some techniques for approaching them with the message of salvation; the second is naturally apologetic and assumes that Jehovah's Witnesses are mistaken and must be confronted by the Gospel—this requires some techniques for meeting them in their doctrinal arguments.

Although this project has been written from the perspective of a Seventh-day Adventist minister, the Christology presented is Christian and not denominational. Furthermore, the principles delineated in the practical application of the project are applicable by all Christians.

The Missionary Aspect

The Christian church was entrusted with a divine mandate; the preaching of the Gospel to all the world (Matt 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15). This mandate possess an all-embracing scope: all
humanity must hear the message of salvation.\textsuperscript{1} The church is in fact a dynamic agency for the salvation of souls.

We believe Jehovah's Witnesses must be included in the church plans of evangelism since their religious beliefs and practices do not permit them to enjoy full salvation in Christ. As is shown here, all their soteriological concepts are structured upon a system of human effort and merit.\textsuperscript{2} The Bible is sufficiently clear in denying any legalistic approach to salvation. In Gal 5:4, for instance, we read: "You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace." To be severed from Christ means one does not have any prospect of salvation through any way other than the Gospel--to be fully lost. There is no real hope for someone who is "separated from Christ" (Eph 2:12); at best there is only false illusion. It would seem that Jehovah's Witnesses are attracted to this cult because of the false sense of security which is offered.\textsuperscript{3} They need to be awakened

\textsuperscript{1}The sense of πᾶντα τὰ ἔθνη in Matt 28:19 (see also 24:14) goes beyond "all nations." A better rendering would be "all peoples." The mandate includes in its scope all groups or "families of mankind"; see Donald A. McGavran, Understanding Church Growth (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1980), p. 56. Evidently religious groups which do not share the correct concept of salvation are equally included.

\textsuperscript{2}About human effort and salvation in Watchtower thought and practice, William J. Whalen comments: "The religion of Jehovah's Witnesses is activist or it is nothing. The salvation of the ordinary Witness consists in obeying the directions of the remnant expressed through the Watchtower Society. He must study the Bible, Watchtower books and magazines. He must warn his neighbors about Armageddon and make a careful count of the hours spent in such activity as well as in Bible study, back calls, and so on." Armageddon Around the Corner (New York: John Day Company, 1962), p. 95.

\textsuperscript{3}The slogan "millions now living will never die" employed by Jehovah's Witnesses in their public work several years ago is a
to their real condition as sinners and to the marvelous saving realities of the Gospel. We are convinced that when this takes place they will be moved to make a decision for Christ.

The Apologetic Aspect

Jehovah's Witnesses sincerely believe that they are the people of God in the last days and that they were designated by Jehovah for the fulfillment of a special work before Armageddon comes. This fact infuses them with a sense of mission. Stirred by the feeling that they have received from Jehovah a message they must communicate to the world, they are compelled to a program of action characterized by persistent knocking on doors.

Thousands or even millions of people every year are visited and indoctrinated in the Watchtower postulates. What is more, through this method of work people interested in Christian doctrines, including those of the Seventh-day Adventist church, and new members with a weak Biblical background are found and disturbed in their faith and confidence in the Gospel. Inasmuch as sincere, nevertheless unwary, souls could be led astray through the teaching of the Witnesses, it is difficult not to consider such teachers a disturbance, if not an actual threat, to the purposes and practices of evangelism, especially as carried out by Seventh-day Adventists.

striking example of the false illusion the cult offers. See J. C. Hardwick, "The Paradise of Sectarianism," Modern Churchman 42 (March 1952):18. Today the Watchtower Society beckons with the message that only Jehovah's Witnesses will survive Armageddon in the near future and many of them will be made rulers upon the earth. We can imagine the positive effect of such a message upon the more oppressed classes of mankind.

1 William H. Keedler remarks that Jehovah's Witnesses' "work is parasitic on established Christian work and very confusing to new
When we realize that each person being baptized into the Jehovah's Witnesses faith becomes not only a member of the congregation but potentially a minister for the Watchtower Society, we understand that this situation becomes more grave every year. According to the most recent report available, in 1979 Jehovah's Witnesses baptized 113,672 new adherents in 205 countries, thus increasing their membership to 2,097,070 worldwide.\(^1\) This strengthens our conviction that Adventist ministers and laymembers in general should be prepared to meet their teachings, particularly when a debate with Jehovah's Witnesses becomes necessary and inevitable.

**Purpose of the Project**

To affirm that Jehovah's Witnesses are lost and that they do not have the correct understanding of God's Word may, at first glance, appear extremely bold, especially when one considers the Watchtower statements of self-esteem. We are told, for example, that Jehovah's Witnesses are "ministers and soldiers of Christ."\(^2\)

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\(^2\)Nathan H. Knorr, "Jehovah's Witnesses of Modern Times," Religion in the Twentieth Century, ed. Vergilius Ferm (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1948), p. 391. Mr. Knorr was the third president of the Watchtower Society in Brooklyn, NY, where the Witnesses have their headquarters, from 1942 until his death in 1977. He was succeeded by Friderick Franz.
In his book A People for His Name, Timothy White comments on the pretentious Watchtower interpretation of Acts 15:14, that it was necessary to preach to the Gentiles for 1,900 years until finally a people could be formed to vindicate Jehovah's name and rulership.¹

In fact, the Watchtower Society does not hesitate to declare its monopoly of truth—only Jehovah's Witnesses compose the true, Biblical, Christian faith; every other religion is false.² If things are so, Jehovah's Witnesses are indeed the most genuine Christian people on the face of the earth and the Gospel needs hardly to be preached to them.

Therefore, the purpose of this project is first to show that the Watchtower pretentions are unsound, that Jehovah's Witnesses are actually non-Christians, that they need to be reached and confronted by the Gospel. With this adequately established, the project then suggests some guidelines on how Witnesses can be helped in their spiritual needs.

In addition to the research purpose just expressed, it is anticipated that this study will offer helpful materials for the use of ministers and laypeople of the Seventh-day Adventist church in their dealing with Jehovah's Witnesses.

¹ A People for His Name (New York: Vantage Press, 1968), pp. 275, 276.

² A Witness writes: "Probably the most outstanding trait of Jehovah's Witnesses is their appeal to Scriptural authority for every turn of mind and hand." As for the various "religions of Christendom" they "are as foreign to the Bible as man's misrule of the earth is foreign to God's purposes for the earth." But Jehovah's Witnesses are the "distinct Bible people." Marley Cole, Triumphant Kingdom (New York: Criterion Books, 1957), pp. 37, 38.
Limitation of the Project

This project does not intend to be a complete review of the Watchtower movement. It does not discuss the origin, historical development, phases of growth and expansion, and present affairs of Jehovah's Witnesses. Sociological aspects of this religion as well as its influence into the world were not considered since they are beyond the scope of this study.

The theological study has been restricted to the areas of Christology and Soteriology. The project does not evaluate the doctrines of Jehovah's Witnesses as a whole.

Time and space prevented this project from supplying a program of action for Seventh-day Adventist churches towards an entire process of evangelization among Jehovah's Witnesses. Therefore, this project is not a complete handbook of evangelism either for ministers or laymembers. Since my premise is that Jehovah's Witnesses need first of all to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, practical insights have been restricted to this point.

Overview of the Project

This study is divided in five chapters as follows:

Chapter I deals with nature and content of Christianity. Christianity as religion and revelation offers the real solution for man's situation. Jesus as the final revelation of God and the place of faith in the divine plan of salvation are included in this chapter.

Chapter II discusses the person and work of Jesus in the light of the Gospel. Jesus Christ as God, as man, as vicarious and
substitutionary sacrifice, as the glorified One, and the implications of these for salvation are analyzed.

Chapter III studies Watchtower Christology and Soteriology evaluated from a Biblical perspective.

Chapter IV is an exegetical study of the deity of Jesus in the Johannine writings. That the deity of Jesus is crucial for eternal salvation is the basic premise of this chapter. The logical conclusion is that the rigid monotheism of any form of unitarianism is unable to offer the real solution for the problem of sin.

Chapter V views Jehovah's Witnesses as a people waiting for salvation provided exclusively by the Gospel. Guidelines for contacting Jehovah's Witnesses are suggested, including orientations for Biblical debate with them.
CHAPTER I

CHRISTIAN OR NON-CHRISTIAN
THE DETERMINING CRITERIUM

If we intend to evaluate whether a religious group professing to be Christian is indeed Christian, we may begin to ask what this group thinks of Christianity or by what concept of Christianity it stands. Christianity is easily confused with a set of doctrines, an ethical system of life, church institutions, and so forth. Indeed Christianity has a doctrinal body by which its beliefs are formulated and a church that incorporates its principles and lives its ethics; but these are only outward elements whose validity must be measured by that which Christianity essentially is.¹

Christianity as Religion and Revelation

Undeniably Christianity should be considered as a religion.²

Religion and revelation go hand in hand and are correlative terms; ¹

¹That such outward elements do not constitute Christianity by themselves is evident from the fact that an individual might model his life by the high patterns of Christian morality or even be a church member, without being a Christian. Even the Bible, normative as it may be, does not express the ultimate and fundamental sense of Christianity, if taken merely as a code of ethics and conduct or a manual of proselytism. (See H. S. Coffin, Some Christian Convictions [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1915], p. 75.) Hence a religious group could profess to be founded entirely on the Bible, but still be a non-Christian religion.

²"Christianity is at all events a religion, and requires to be judged as such" (Anders Nygren, Essence of Christianity [Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1961], p. 22). Yet Karl Barth prefers
that is, "The relation in which man places himself to God in religion presupposes the relation in which God has placed himself to man in revelation."¹ This means that a revelation of God, distorted by man, can result in a human response consonant to such distortion and consequently improper toward God. Righteousness by works is a striking illustration of this process. The crucial point in any approach to religion, therefore, is this human response which at times shows the "revelation" to be inaccurate and characterizes the religion as false.² Christianity must substantiate its genuineness as true religion by bringing about a correct revelation of God, by inviting man to a correct response to all God has done for him, and then by placing man in a proper relationship with God. In short, Christianity essentially has to do with divine revelation and consequent human response, resulting in man's eternal salvation.


²Karl Barth clings to this fact in discussing the distinction between false and true religion. To him false religion does not reveal God at all, but opposes the revelation of God with an arbitrary idea of God. Therefore religion has to be "justified" to be true religion. What justifies it is the correct human conduct toward the revelation. That is why such a justification involves faith (Barth, pp. 301-10, 331-38).
Thus, Christianity is both religion and revelation. Revelation because it originates in what God has done for man, and religion because it determines how man must behave toward the action of God. This action is to be observed particularly "in the person of Jesus," as E. G. Sanford declares, and considered in its ultimate objective, "to restore to mankind the lost fellowship with God." Thus defined, Christianity offers the solution for the problem of sin and its consequences.

God's revelation is absolute because He Himself has entered into history in direct action upon mankind. It is also universal; that is, it does not address only an ethical group or a privileged class, but the entire human race—God reconciles "the world to Himself" (2 Cor 5:19). It is "complete and final" in the sense that the extent and manner by which God has revealed Himself makes all further progress in real knowledge of God dependent upon such a revelation. In other words, any knowledge of God and His will must be understood in the light of His revelation through and in Jesus Christ. This means that Christianity is of divine origin and differs

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1 E. B. Sanford, A Concise Cyclopaedia of Religious Knowledge (1895), p. 175.

2 H. P. Liddon defines Christianity as the result of God's self-disclosure when he says: "The Absolute Religion is introduced by a self-revelation of the Absolute Being Himself. God has appeared, God has spoken; and the Christian faith is the result" (The Divinity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ [New York: Longmans, Green & Company, 1900], p. 243).

3 E. Royston Pike, Encyclopaedia of Religion and Religions (1951), p. 94.
inherently from all other religions in the world. It also means that Christianity alone is enabled to answer all the cries and needs of human nature.

Revelation in History

This revelation is made to man within his own environment and condition. We must search for the identity of God, not in the realm of ideas, as supported by Hellenistic concepts and by Theosophical abstractions, but in the field of human history. Christianity is not so much a religion about what God is, but about what God has done. Human history is the story of man in sin, separated and alienated from God, but precisely because of this, it is also the story of God searching and saving man. As

---


2 "The being and attributes of God are nowhere systematically presented but are inferences from events. Biblical man did not possess a philosophical notion of deity whence this or that was of God. This ubiquitous modern habit of mind which reasons from axioms and principles or universals to the concrete would have been considered as faithless rebellion against the Lord of history who used history to reveal his will and purpose" (G. Ernest Wright, God Who Acts [Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1950], pp. 57, 58). In fact, atheism in the Bible is fundamentally to ignore the action of God in history (Pss 14 and 53).

3 Mackenzie, p. 61, recalls that the incarnation reveals God as a personal being. God is not an influence or power that infuses in the human mind abstract concepts about Himself. The God of Christians is a personal One, and this fact distinguishes Christianity from other religions, mainly those of Eastern philosophy such as Buddhism and Hinduism. "In religions of this type, the secret of salvation lies in the cognitive understanding of Being, by which understanding the soul is joined with deity" (C. C. Morrison, [What is Christianity? [Chicago: Willet, Clark & Company, 1940], p. 93).

4 Human history, as the story of man in sin, begins not with the creation (Gen 1) but with the fall (Gen 3). Here we have the
G. E. Ladd says, "History is not recorded for its own sake. History is recorded because it embodies the acts of God."¹ Such acts are saving acts, and history is the scene where they are performed. Theologically it is known as Heilsgeschichte, the history of salvation, with particular applicability to the Biblical history but not restricted to it, since God is the Lord of history and His hand has directed the historical events everywhere and in all times for the fulfillment of His ultimate purpose:²

story of the first occultation (or the first false religion?), not of God, but of man who hid himself "from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden" (in vs. 8 man had put on fig-tree leaves, now uses the trees in general to cover himself before God--this is of course the first attempt of justification by works). History begins both with occultation and manifestation. Sin separated man from God, not the contrary (Isa 59:1). God comes in quest of man, but he hides himself from God. The act of separation is man's; that of revelation is God's. So the lapse of the centuries witnessed these two concomitant attitudes--man separating himself from God, and God seeking and saving man (cf. Isa 65:2). The whole historical process which culminates with the Christian faith is characterized on the one hand by the unhappy situation of man in sin, alienated from God and lost, and on the other hand by the divine concern for man and for his salvation. Human failures and divine provisions in the first twelve chapters of Genesis illustrate this point:

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²Biblical theology inevitably leads to this view of history.
"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Hab 2:14). This is a saving knowledge which implies a revelational process of and from God.

**Jesus and Divine Revelation**

The process of revelation developed by God in history reaches its culmination in Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. They are "the consummative event in the historical revelation of God," or as Carl F. Henry puts it, "Special revelation involves unique historical events of divine deliverance climaxed by the incarnation, atonement and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the supreme disclosure of God in the flesh." This does not mean that after Jesus divine revelation was no more, but that He is the very center and reason of being of the *Heilsgeschichte*. From this center the whole of history must be understood and interpreted. Oscar Cullmann states that the

since it is "fundamentally an interpretation of history, a confessional recital of historical events as the acts of God, events which lead backward to the beginning of history and forward to its end" (Wright, p. 57).

1Habakkuk, a small book among the Minor Prophets, stresses the fact that God directs history and His purpose of restoration and salvation will completely be fulfilled. Von Orelli has demonstrated that the promise of 2:14 "extends the range of the domain to the whole earth." The Twelve Minor Prophets (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1863), p. 250. God/man relationship has been broken through sin, but God is directing events in such a way that this relationship will be restored not only with the people of the prophet, but in all the earth. This will be possible because of the restoration of the covenant relationship to be effected under the conditions of the New Covenant (Jer 31:34) and will attain its climax in the Messianic Kingdom (Isa 11:9).

2Morrison, p. 88.

appearing of Jesus of Nazareth is number one within the divine
revelational process, as well as the final meaning and criterion
"of all history before and after it."\(^1\) Thus, to the believer sacred
history and secular history become History of Salvation. This
also means that there is no revelation disconnected from Jesus
Christ. The pre-existent, the incarnate, and finally the glorified
Christ, through whose mediation the Holy Spirit is bestowed upon
human beings, is the fountain of divine revelation in all ages.
He is the Lamb who was slain from the foundation of the world
(Rev 13:8).\(^2\)

\(^1\) O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (Philadelphia: Westminster

\(^2\) Therefore it is not entirely correct to say that Christianity
exists from Jesus or the Apostles onwards. Israel and Christian
church make up "one living string of divine revelation" (Morrison,
p. 90). From the perspective of the Heilsgeschichte "Israel was the
Christian church before Christ" (ibid., p. 91). The God that now
manifests Himself in a conclusive form in Jesus is the same God that
had manifested Himself in history from the beginning. "God has
entered into a direct, complete relationship with man, so that there
is no distance between the Holy One and man." Th. C. Vriezen, *An
p. 147. Indeed in the course of history God has not remained aloof
from man (Acts 17:27) but periodically come in contact with him.
Such divine manifestations were preparatory steps for the full dis­
closure of His salvation. The contrast between OT and NT is based
on this fact. "The Old and the New Covenants were inevitably seen
as related through the conception of preparation and promise, on
the one hand, and of completion and fulfillment on the other" (Wright,
p. 64). Even in events where God's direct action was not per­
ceived He was operating towards the fulfillment of His purposes.
"In each event which came to their nation the prophets were quick to
recognize the hand of God carrying his purpose. In their sublime
philosophy, even the heathen conquerors were simply agents, doing
Jehovah's will in the midst of his people." F. C. Kent, *The Kings
and Prophets of Israel and Judah* (New York: Charles Scribner's
Sons, 1917), p. 265. In regard to this fact E. G. White says: "In
the record of sacred history were traced the footsteps of Jehovah.
... We behold, behind, above, and through the passions, the
agencies of the all-merciful One, silently, patiently working out
the counsels of His own will." E. G. White, *Education* (Mountain
With the events related to the presence of Jesus on earth, the "Day of the Lord" has indeed broken into history. H. H. Rowley rightly observes that this Day was conceived by the prophets "as the time of the divine breaking into History in spectacular fashion. While God was believed to be always active on the plane of History, using nature, and man to fulfill his ends, the Day of the Lord was thought of as a day of more direct and clearly manifest action."\(^1\) Evidently this Day began with the presence of the Son of God among men.\(^2\) With Him the "last days" arrived and the New Age is inaugurated as a guarantee that the story of sin (the Old Age) has come to its conclusion. The New Age has indeed begun in the first advent, has come across the centuries until our time, and soon will be fully established in eschatological consummation by the Second Advent.

**Christianity Is Christ**

Christianity is therefore a matter of Christology and consequent\(^3\) soteriology understood as present and eschatological

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\(^2\) Jesus' message "the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15), opening His earthly ministry, presupposes this fact. As for the verbal form \(\text{περιγραφείν} \) implying arrival, see C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), pp. 28, 29, and "The Kingdom of God Has Come," *Expository Times* 48 (1936/1937):138-42. However, as David Hill has observed, we should understand the eschatology of the Kingdom as inaugurated and not as wholly realized, as Dodd wants. See *The Gospel of Matthew*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1972), p. 105.

\(^3\) D. Bonhoeffer demonstrates that we can know what Jesus is only as we know who He is. So Soteriology is dependent upon Christology and cannot be separated from it. "Thus the priority in theology of the Christological question has been established. When
salvation. It is Christological because it has in Christ its foundation and content. If there is no Christ, there is no Christianity at all. Everything Christianity is, it is in Christ.\(^1\) If Christianity is thought of as the Church, Christ is its head and the church is His body; if conceived as a doctrinal system or mode of life, Christ is the very embodiment of Christian doctrine and life. Phillip Schaff states that Christianity "is a Person, not a system of ethics or of divinity; it is a Life, not a thought."\(^2\) So Christ is the foundation stone of the entire Christian edifice, and its substance. "Christ is the beginning, center, and end. Christianity is Christ, for to proclaim it is to proclaim Him."\(^3\) Christian faith is not a "theory but a present, a living reality" and "is not related to ideas but to a person."\(^4\)

Christianity is also Soteriological, since it embraces a

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\(^1\)"Christ sets his seal upon everything" (Nygren, p. 57).


\(^3\)G. W. Bromiley, "Christianity," The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (1979), 1:659.

\(^4\)J. Ratzinger, Introduction to Christianity (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970), pp. 148, 151. On p. 151, he states: "Faith in Jesus as the Christ is therefore truly 'personal faith,'" and explains: "Such faith is not the acceptance of a system but the acceptance of this person who is his word; of the word as person and of the person as word."
whole process of divine revelation, reconciliation, and restoration of fellowship between God and man. But as we said, its being Soteriological is consequent from its being Christological, for such a process has its efficient cause in Jesus Christ. It is He who "reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature" (Heb 1:3), who "has broken down the dividing wall of hostility" (Eph 2:14), reconciling "all things whether on earth or in heaven" (Col 1:20), and who has come "to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). In order that these soteriological facts might be possible, He had to become both the justice of God and the sin of man. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21). The efficacy of the plan of salvation resides in this sublime paradox.

As Luther affirmed:

... learn Christ and him crucified; learn to pray to him despairing of yourself, saying: Thou, Lord Jesus, art my righteousness, but I am thy sin; thou hast taken on thyself what thou was not, and hast given to me what I was not.

And from E. G. White:

Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. "With His stripes we are healed."

The incarnation is the supreme act of God's revelation

1 Martin Luther to George Spenlein, April 8, 1516, in Luther's Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters, trans. and ed. Preserved Smity (Philadelphia: The Lutheran Publication Society, 1913), p. 34.

because through it He can reveal Himself to man not merely in words, as He did by the prophets in OT times, but personally and in a living way. The incarnation is also the supreme act of reconciliation because it affords an opportunity for a divine sacrifice by which a definitive atonement for man's sins is made. Finally, the incarnation is the supreme act of restoration, since through it the gap between God and man, caused by sin, is bridged and the lost sheep is brought back to the fold. It is true that if man never had sinned he would have enjoyed an eternal fellowship with God. But then he would never have had the privilege of welcoming God as a member of his own species. He came to identify Himself with our plight, to rescue us from our fallen condition, and to place us back in our original state, but with an additional advantage: He will always be one of us. White states:

By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. Through the eternal ages He is linked with us... To assure us of His immutable counsel of peace, God gave His only-begotten Son to become one of the human family, forever to retain His human nature.¹

The Human Response: To Believe in Jesus Christ

So Christology and Soteriology make up the very core of Christianity and the assertion that Christianity is Christ is justified. Because he who becomes Christian receives in his life not simply the teaching of or about Christ, but the very Christ Himself,

¹Ibid.
he becomes not a mere reciter of His teaching but a living exposition of it. In such an exposition he demonstrates he is saved. "It is by our living Savior Jesus Christ that we are brought home to God, not through some doctrine of him, or some doctrine of the manner of His Saviour-hood." R. William Dale illustrates this point: "It is not the doctrine of the death of Christ that atones for human sin, but the death itself."2

J. Ratzinger recalls that the central formula of Christian faith is not "I believe in something" but "I believe in thee."3 Man responds positively to the saving manifestation of God in Jesus Christ by believing not in a code of ethics, or in a body of doctrines, but in a Person, namely Christ Himself. With this attitude he becomes a Christian.

Here the experience of Paul is a remarkable illustration. Before his becoming a Christian he believed in a great deal of prescriptions and doctrinal statements. But the day came when he considered whatever was to his profit "loss for the sake of Christ." Commenting on his experience of being a Christian, he says: "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing [not other thing but] Jesus Christ my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things, I consider rubbish, that I may gain

1William N. Clarke, What Shall We Think about Christianity? (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1899), pp. 93, 94.

2Quoted by Clarke, p. 93.

3Ratzinger, p. 47.
Christ" (Phil 3:8 NIV). He knew Whom (not what) he believed (2 Tim 1:12). We can hardly disagree with Merril C. Tenney that this is "the final expression of triumphant Christian experience." Triumphant because it is genuine, and genuine because it is founded in Jesus Christ who is the substance and content of true Christianity, He "who fills all in all" (Eph 1:23).

This does not mean that Christianity has nothing to do with doctrines. Indeed there is a set of teachings which must be communicated by Christians to the world. The great commission establishes this fact in an explicit manner: "Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you" (Matt 28:19, 20). It is by going and teaching that Christians can "make disciples" for the Lord. Christianity becomes a way of life just through this process. It is impossible to separate Christian life from Christian doctrine since the latter is the formulation of the former. We cannot separate the kerygma (the proclamation of Christ as Savior and Lord) from the didache (His teachings) and yet retain the Christian message. J. Gresham Maches observes: "The early Christians were living lives . . . founded upon a doctrine." But such a Christian doctrine was nothing but the very expression of Christ and His life. If Christianity is despoiled of this reality it is brought down to the level of other religions. Actually the uniqueness of Christianity is determined not so much by


the magnitude of the message itself, but by the excellence of its Founder who is to be exalted by its message. Bromiley remarks that Christianity is not a construct of human philosophy, though it points to true wisdom. It is not a system of theological dogmas, though dogmatic truths are involved. It is not just an inward and subjective experience, though it entails a personal relationship with God. It is not mere code of ethics, though it carries with it a way of life. In fact, it is not to be understood or explained in any anthropological terms except insofar as Jesus Himself is true man. It is supremely Christological.

Thus any assent to doctrinal issues can never replace the acceptance of Christ as Savior and Lord, nor even complement it. The belief in doctrines is to be subject to the believing in Christ, and the practice of them must be but the external reflecting of an internal condition. Christianity as a way of life is more than a mere life-style. It is fruit of the Christian experience of salvation in Jesus, which makes it genuine. To believe in Jesus necessarily produces a changed life.

The Place of Faith

Here therefore Christianity becomes first a redemptive experience, then an ethical way of life. Real Christian life begins with the acceptance of Christ as personal Savior and Lord,

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1Bromiley, p. 659.

2Cf. William Temple's remarks about faith and doctrines: "Faith is not the holding of correct doctrines, but personal fellowship with the Living God. Correct doctrines will both express this, assist it, and issue from it; incorrect doctrine will misrepresent this and hinder or prevent it. Doctrine is of an importance too great to be exaggerated, but its place is secondary, not primary. I do not believe in any creed, but I use certain creeds to express, to conserve, and to deepen my belief in God" (Nature, Man and God [London: Macmillan & Company, 1956], p. 322).
made possible through faith which God implants in the human heart when the Gospel is preached and heard (Rom 10:17). Although faith is the way by which man responds positively to the provision God has made in Jesus, the Bible states clearly that faith is a gift of God (Eph 2:8) and a fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22), Jesus being its author and perfecter (Heb 12:2).¹ This signifies that for true Christianity human salvation is provided exclusively by God and even the manner by which man can enjoy it is also a divine work. Not only is faith in Jesus a result of God's action but the experiences attached to the act of believing, which are easily misunderstood as human initiative, have their origin in God. So repentance is given by God as well as the forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:31); conversion and new birth are produced by the Holy Spirit (John 3:3, 5); and good works, as a result of faith, are prepared by God beforehand (Eph 2:7). It is therefore understandable that the Bible declares eternal life to be a free gift of God (Rom 6:23).² There belongs to man the due exercise of his will. He must wish for the salvation provided in Christ. "Let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without price" (Rev 22:17). But even this thirst and desire are aroused by God.

So through faith the resources of Heaven become individually effective in the believer. He is led through repentance to rejoice

¹Acts 3:16 affirms that faith is possible only through Jesus.

²Different from others, Christian religion emphasizes principally God's making, not human activity. Nygren says: "In relation to God we are never giving, but always receiving. And God requires of us nothing else but that" (Nygren, p. 74).
in the forgiveness of his sins, since Jesus paid his ransom with an infinite price. He "redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us" (Gal 3:13). Man was under the condemnation of God's law, and he could never fulfill its demands and attain the righteousness required by this law. In such a state, man had God's wrath pending upon his head, like the sword of Damocles. But Heaven provided Christ, the Lamb of God, to redeem the sinner by means of His life and substitutionary death. He received God's wrath in our place.

He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. . . . The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. . . . He makes himself an offering for sin. . . . By his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous; and he shall bear their iniquities. (Isa 53:5,6,10,11)

However faith is required from man. Commenting on this fact, E. G. White says:

Righteousness is obedience to the law. The law demands righteousness, and this the sinner owes to the law; but he is incapable of rendering it. The only way in which he can attain to righteousness is through faith. By faith he can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of His Son to the sinner's account. Christ's righteousness is accepted in place of man's failure, and God receives, pardons, justifies, the repentant, believing soul, treats him as though he were righteous, and loves him as He loves His Son. This is how faith is accounted righteousness.1

Righteousness by Faith versus Righteousness by Works

Therefore it is foolishness to attempt salvation through human effort and merit. The God who is so pure, holy, and perfect that He does not see absolute perfection even in His angels (Job 4:18) cannot look but with a mixture of disdain and indignation at the man who, despising the secure way of salvation He has provided in Christ, searches for self-justification before Him. "All our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment" (Isa 64:6).

There is no compatibility between righteousness by works and righteousness by faith. They exclude one another. "If justification were through the law, then Christ died to no purpose" (Gal 2:21). However, the very fact that an all-wise God gave us His Son to die for us is evidence that there is no way of salvation except through faith in Him. "And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). And the sacred writer asks: "How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?" (Heb 2:3). Man can do nothing to compensate his negligence. There is no hope for him.

When Paul speaks of "works of law" as a deviant way of salvation, he refers obviously to any religious self-achievements in order to gain the favor of God. Salvation is a free gift of God through Jesus Christ bestowed to those who believe.

Faith and New Life

Then, justified by faith, man has peace with God (Rom 5:1), that is, he is reconciled with God (Rom 5:10), and is born from
above for a new life of justice by the renewing power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 6:4-13; 8:9-17). Such a new life continues to grow in fellowship with God and with his fellow believers; love reigns supreme. Now he is a Christian as a result of his commitment to Christ and consequent membership in His body. Naturally all of this presupposes the experience of the new birth as a reality to every believer. Through it he "enters" the kingdom of God (John 3:3, 5). The life of the kingdom, which is the very life of Christ, becomes his life, his way of life, a life under the sovereignty of divine love.

We reach here the most sublime aspect of Christianity--Christianity as a transforming and saving element. Here it stops being a mere theory or ideal and becomes a dynamic experience through which God can reproduce the character of His Son in the sinner. Again the example of Paul must be cited. He said: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20). This reciprocity constitutes by itself the vital principle that makes Christianity the final solution for the terrible problem of sin. Christ died for our salvation, but unless we die with him in order that He might live in us and we in Him, we cannot be saved. But when this fact becomes a reality in our lives, as it was in Paul's, we are set free from any kind of bondage and are saved. Christ in us is "the hope of glory" (Col 1:27). This hope is guaranteed in Christ, for in Him God has already made us "sit with Him in the heavenly places" (Eph 2:6). Therefore salvation is
a present possession, although we look forward to that day when our pilgrimage will be finished.

E. J. Waggoner affirmed:

Whoever believes that Christ is crucified in him, risen in him, and dwells in him, is saved from sin. And he will be saved as long as he holds to his belief. This is the only true confession of faith.1

"... as long he holds." This denotes dependence upon Christ. In fact the Christian has his foundation and center in Christ. He lives a Christ-oriented life. As Alan Cole puts it,

Christ is the sole meaning of life for him now; every moment is passed in conscious dependence on Him, to whom he looks for everything. This is Christian faith; and it is intensely personal, both as regards subject and object, if these terms are allowed. It is faith in God's Son (linking the cross with the will of the Father) who loved Paul, and gave himself (NEB, 'sacrificed himself') for Paul.2

Each expression in Gal 2:20 denotes communion between Christ and the believer: I have been crucified with Christ, Christ lives in me, I live in the Son of God,3 Christ loved me and gave himself for me. Such a communion is the fruit of love, like two beings who love one another and are joined as husband and wife to be one flesh. Moved by love Christ sacrificed Himself for us.4 Such

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3The expression "in Christ" is characteristic of Paul to stress, as Adolf Deissman says, "The most intimate fellowship with the living spiritual Christ." The Religion of Jesus and the Faith of Paul, William E. Wilson, trans. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1923), p. 172. "In Christ" and parallel forms ("in the Son of God," "in the Lord," etc.) "occurs one hundred and sixty-four times in Paul's letters; it is really the characteristic expression of his Christianity" (ibid., p. 171).

4The picture of marriage as a symbol of the union of Christ
wonderful love moves us to love Him and to die with Him. So the
saving process in regard to us is completed: He dies for us
(Christ's objective act in our behalf), we die with Him (our

with His church appears especially in Eph 5:21-33. There the
husband is presented as the head of the wife and the wife as part
of the body of the husband. Christ is the head of the church while
the church is his body. As in Gal 2:20 where the sacrifice of
Jesus is fruit of love, here also Christ has "loved the Church and
gave himself up for her" (vs. 25). Christ "marries" the church in
His sacrifice. She is present in it since the church is constituted
by those who "died and were raised with Christ" for a reciprocal
living: they in Him and He in them. So the object of Christ's
death is achieved: He died for the church "that he might sanctify
her" (vs. 26). The process of sanctification is performed by the
presence of Christ in the church through the Holy Spirit bestowed
by the Father to all who believe. Through this Spirit Jesus lives
His life in the church and it is sanctified. "Washing of water"
refers to the experience of baptism in which the believer is buried
and raised with Jesus through faith (Col 2:12). "With the word"
denotes the creative power of God. The world was created by the
word of God (Ps 33:6; Heb 11:3). So the new creation is also per­
formed by the word of God (1 Pet 1:23) and subsists "in Christ"
(2 Cor 5:17). "He who loves his wife loves himself" (vs. 28).
Marriage is a perfect illustration of the union between Christ and
the church. "Man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to
his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (vs. 31). So Christ
left the Father and the heavenly glory to be with us and to be one
of us. As L. S. Thornton observes, Jesus "became one flesh with
us through His incarnation." By His death, resurrection and ascension
the Spirit has been granted in a such way that the church, the
Bride, can "attain the identity of a fully distinct existence as
complement of the Bridegroom... All that happened to the
incarnate Lord happened to the church in him... all that so
happened to him and in him now happens in the church by mystical
union with him" (Christ and the Church [Westminster: Dacre Press,
1956], pp. 12-14). Thornton here grounds his argument on the
Gospel of John, but this marvelous experience is reaffirmed in the
Pauline writings by the frequent "in Christ" expression, or as
Anders Nygren puts it, "To be 'in Christ' is the same as to be a
member of the body of Christ" (Christ and His Church [London:
S.P.C.K., 1957], p. 93). To him this designation indicates the
"indissoluble relationship and unity" between Christ and the Church
(ibid., p. 96). The submission of the church to Christ is also
emphasized when Paul commends the wife to be subject to her husband
(vss. 22-24, 33).
subjective response to His act,\(^1\) and life with Him is the result: He lives in us and we live in Him. Communion in His death causes communion in His life, like His own experience of being dead and raised. Baptism both signifies and seals this experience for the believer (Rom 6:3, 4; Col 2:12). He dies unto sin; its lordship is broken; and in faith he lives unto God under a new lordship, that of Jesus Christ. So his salvation is experienced.\(^2\) This implies "a new, reborn life, in which the strength of Christ's love, in which the liberating Spirit, reveals Himself."\(^3\)

To be a Christian, therefore, is to enjoy an existential belonging to Christ. This fact is manifested in a life of absolute submission to Him.\(^4\) Only so are we free from sin and death. Only


\(^2\)The Christian confession of Jesus' lordship is precondition for salvation: "If you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Rom 10:9). It fulfills the OT statement: "Every one who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved" (vs. 13). Cf. Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21-38; 22:16.

\(^3\)H. N. Ridderbos, The Epistle of Paul to the Churches of Galatia, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 106. Thence the new birth is fundamental for salvation. That Paul in this text is not speaking of an experience that is granted for him and more a few highly privileged individuals but to every believer is clear from his statements in Gal 3:1-3. See John Bligh, Galatians, A Discussion of St. Paul's Epistle, HC, Vol. 1 (London: St. Paul Publication, 1969), p. 215. Indeed a religion that does not motivate its members to such an experience, or that limits it to a few privileged ones cannot in fact be Christian, if to be Christian is first of all this dynamic relationship with Jesus: we in Christ and Christ in us.

\(^4\)Commenting on the formula for one being a disciple of Jesus as declared in Matt 16:24, "If any man would come after me, let him
so is Jesus able to live His life in us and are we able to live in faith a life unto God. Only so is salvation, achieved by Jesus on the cross, a real possession for each of us.

Conclusion: The Criterium Is Christ

Therefore the Christological question, "Who is Jesus Christ?" followed by the Soteriological question, "What is Jesus Christ?" (what is He to and for you?) makes up the very basis on which a religious group is judged to be Christian or not. Christ is both the stumbling-block and the cornerstone. He Himself is the decisive criterium. A Christian is the one who retains the biblical concept of Jesus and has made an unconditional commitment to Him, on the basis of what the Word of God says.

At this point, therefore, the Bible, studied under the direction of the Holy Spirit, is the supreme authority for a final decision. Both the Bible and the Holy Spirit testify about Jesus (John 5:39; 15:26). Without the Christ of the revelation any pretension for Christianity will tumble in. "For no other foundation can one lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 3:13). In other words, it does not matter if a religious group professes to be Christian, to be founded on the Bible, or to obey the deni
true God. If it does not have Jesus as its Alpha and Omega in the kerygma, and does not motivate its members to maintain the soteriological relationship with Him, it can hardly be considered genuinely Christian.

A consideration of what Jehovah's Witnesses believe and teach about Jesus and the way one must relate to Him is thus not only worthy but imperative. This study is taken up in chapter 3. Let us consider now the biblical teaching on Jesus' person and work.
Who is Jesus?

Although this question is amply debated by both friends and foes of Christianity, we can be sure that human answers really are of little value since what man thinks or fails to think of Jesus does not change what He really is—"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever" (Heb 13:8). We must turn our attention to the Word of God if we want a true answer.

Correct concepts regarding Jesus' person and work come from God, for "no one knows the Son except the Father" (Matt 11:27). Peter, after his memorable answer to the Christological question, "Who do you say that I am?" (Matt 16:15), was assured by Jesus that he had received special revelation from above: "... flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven" (vs. 17).\(^1\) His answer had been: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (vs. 16). Later, when Peter wrote his two epistles,\(^2\)

\(^1\)Cf. Bonhoeffer, p. 31: "It is only from God that man knows who he is."

\(^2\)It is not our purpose here to discuss the authorship of 2 Peter. However, as yet we have not found sufficiently plausible reasons to suspect Petrine authorship.
he explicitly confessed Jesus' Deity, Lordship, and Saviorhood.¹

At least four great Christological realities about Jesus as Savior demand our attention: (1) He possesses divine and human natures, (2) He never sinned, (3) He died for our sins, and (4) He was raised from the dead.

His Divine and Human Natures

He Is God

A Savior less than divine would not be sufficient to solve the problem of sin. This can be deduced from three major facts:

1. Sin as both principle and practice is a breaking of God's holy law (1 John 3:4).² Sin, therefore, has to do not only with human condition and behavior. The very integrity of God's character is evoked and challenged by sin.³ Sin has led man to a misapprehension of God, His justice and love, in short, His

¹See 1 Pet 1:3, 18-20; 2:3-8, 21-25; 3:15, 18, 21, 22; 4:11; 2 Pet 1:1, 2, 8, 11, 16; 2:1, 20; 3:2, 15, 18. The formula "Lord and Savior" is characteristic of 2 Peter, but both terms are applied to Jesus throughout the NT.

²"According to Scripture, sin is nonconformity to the divine law (νόμος) which is given to man as a norm; and this norm pertains both to man's condition (status, habitus) and to his individual internal or external actions (actiones internae et externae)." Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 1:528.

³Dallas M. Roark remarks that "one can only declare something to be sin which violates the nature of God." The Christian Faith (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), p. 213. On p. 225 he says that by sinning "not only does man violate the structural makeup of his nature, but he also violates the nature of the Designer." Therefore the intrinsic implications of sin are more profound than might be noticed superficially.
character. Sin has also marred the image of God, His character, in man. Only He who "is the image of the invisible God" (Col 1:17), who "reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature" (Heb 1:3) could reveal God, convey the saving knowledge of Him (John 1:18; 14:9-11; 17:3), and restore in man the divine image. Human redemption is performed on the basis of divine revelation. Only God can reveal God.

2. Both the immediate and final consequences of sin are of eternal character and nature. Sin has opened an immeasurable abyss between God and man, and subjected man to an infinite debt before God's justice. Such expressions as eternal judgment (Heb 6:2), eternal destruction (2 Thess 1:9), eternal punishment (Matt 25:46), and so on, denote this fact. Only a being possessing the divine attribute of eternity and infiniteness could pay the price for man's redemption. Jesus as God is author of eternal redemption (Heb 9:12) and eternal salvation (Heb 5:9). Whoever believes on Him has eternal life (John 3:16).

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1 Denise and John Carmody: "At heart, beneath the many variants of sin is ignorance of God. Because they do not know God ... sinners feed an evil heart, a deliberate unrealism." Christianity: An Introduction (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1983), p. 29. We see in chap. 3 that salvation from sin is grounded upon knowledge of God.

2 "Without the revelation of Jesus Christ, we are thrown back upon our own resources for obtaining a knowledge of God. In all honesty we must confess that a god that can be discovered by human effort is hardly worth discovering. If any idea of God is really mine, then I could attach little significance to it at all. If Jesus Christ is not God incarnate, I must confess that I know nothing of God and am thrown back upon a theology based on nature and the nebulous God of reason" (Roark, p. 112).

3 The Greek term for eternal is οἰδώλως, employed by NT writers more than seventy times, nearly always linked to the New
3. The Bible depicts man's redemption as a creative work, namely, a work with the same nature as that of creation at the beginning. "If one is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Cor 5:17). The creative God is the redeeming God. "Thus says the Lord, he who created you . . . he who formed you . . . 'Fear not, for I have redeemed you'" (Isa 43:1). In other words only the Creator can be the Savior. As He created Heaven and Earth ex nihilo, even so "He made us who were dead in trespasses, alive with Christ" (Eph 2:5, MLB. See also vs. 1). This fact ratifies the next Pauline statement that "By grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God" (vs. 8). Redemption is again declared to be a work of creation, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, Age. Scholars are prone to recognize that the quantitative sense of αἰώνιος is secondary and that it stresses more the quality of the noun it modifies. D. F. Salmond, although an immortalist and advocate of the endless punishment of the wicked, comments on the formula "eternal life" recorded seventeen times in the Gospel of John, saying: "The 'eternal' is a qualitative term, not a quantitative; used not in order to add to the 'life' the idea of perpetuity, but to express more fully the quality which belongs to the 'life' itself." The Christian Doctrine of Immortality (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1907), p. 391. Donald G. Bloesch, also an immortalist, affirms that αἰώνιος does not mean "endless" but refers "to the quality more than to the length of life, though certainly in the case of those who are in heaven we can affirm their continuance in fellowship with God throughout all ages." Essentials of Evangelical Theology (San Francisco: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1979), 2:229. Concerning eternal punishment, J. Arthur Baird remarks that Jesus is employing eternal "in its vertical, spiritual sense," and comments: "This does not describe a torture that is unending in a horizontal sense so much as the fire and the punishment of the αἰών, that which is peculiar to the realm and the nature of God." The Justice of God in the Teaching of Jesus (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), p. 233. To Alan Richardson αἰώνιος "probably does not mean 'everlasting' . . . . The real issue concerns the character of the punishment as that of the order of the Age to Come as contrasted with any earthly penalties." An Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1958), p. 74.
that we should walk in them" (vs. 10). Even the good works which are fruits of faith by which we are saved, are the result of God's creation.

Creation is the unique identification of the true God (Isa 40:25, 26). It is also a manifestation of the efficacy of His salvation (51:6). When God invited Abraham to look upward to heaven and to "number the stars" (Gen 15:5), he wanted him to be confident that He had power to fulfill the promise: "So shall your descendants be." The same God who had created billions of stars from nothing could make Abraham a father of crowds, something humanly impossible.¹

¹Redemption as creation ex nihilo is referred to by Paul also in Rom 4, where he recalls the promise of God to Abraham, according to which he would be made "the father of many nations." Paul comments on the unshakable faith of the patriarch who grasped the promise and believed that the God "who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist" (vs. 17) could fulfill it in spite of his incapacities and those of his wife: "In hope he believed against hope, that he should become the father of many nations... He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead because he was about a hundred years old, or when considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb" (vss. 18, 19). Then the apostle applies the experience of Abraham to our own experience as believers. Faith, through which we are made a new creation, is reckoned as righteousness on our account as it was with Abraham, since it (our faith) is the same kind of faith Abraham exercised. "It will be reckoned to us who believe in him that raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (vss. 24, 25). It is with the resurrection of Christ that "the New Age of resurrection and life (cf. 1:4)" began. Anders Nygren, Commentary on Romans (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1949), p. 184. We become the new creation of God when we die with Christ and are raised with Him in order that we "might walk in newness of life" (6:4-10). This is actually creation ex nihilo, as K. Barth states: "Faith beholds life and existence where the man of the world sees nothing but death and non-existence; and contrariwise, it sees death and non-existence where he beholds full blooded life." The Epistle to the Romans (London: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 141. In other words, saving faith is founded on the creative power of God, the same power that is manifested in the Gospel for
Therefore, since Jesus is the Savior and the Redeemer, it is not improper to think of Him as the Creator. In fact, the witness of the NT is clear to this respect (John 1:3; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2). He is not only the Creator but is also the Sustainer of creation (Col 1:17; Heb 1:2). Paul moves naturally from the realm of creation to that of redemption in his comment about the person and work of Christ. "All things were created through him and for him... in him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the first-born from the dead..."

salvation to every one who believes (1:16). Faith that understands the world as created by God "out of things which do not appear" (Heb 11:3) also accepts the fact that even from stones (which in terms of life are nothing) God is able "to raise up children to Abraham" (Matt 3:9). C. K. Barrett says: "It is when human hope is exhausted that God-given hope comes into effect; in the midst of human death and non-existence it looks to God, who quickens and creates... The man who believes has his attention turned away from himself and fixed upon God as the only source of life." A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1957), p. 97. Man does not have anything to offer to help God to make him a new creation. In this respect man as a sinner is nothing, and out of this nothingness God creates a child of His and an heir of His Kingdom.

\footnote{C. F. Burney, in a study of Prov 8:22 and Gen 1:1 as probable background for this Pauline Christological passage and also for Rev 3:14, has demonstrated the profound implication of Christ as the beginning (Gr. ἀρχή). Inasmuch as the Hebrew preposition ו and the noun נשע (Gen 1:1) have more than one meaning, he says: "The force of the preposition be attached to reshith may be interpreted as "IN" ("IN reshít God created"); hence IN HIM were created all things in the heavens and upon the earth... But again, the preposition may bear the sense "BY" ("BY the agency of reshith"); hence all things were created THROUGH HIM. Yet again it may be interpreted "INTO" ("INTO reshith"); from which it follows that creation tends INTO HIM as its goal [RSV says "for him"]. Passing on to the substantive reshith, we note that it ordinarily bears the sense "Beginning"; hence Christ is BEFORE all things. It may so have the meaning "SUM-TOTAL"; so that all things ARE SUMMED UP IN HIM. Yet another meaning is "HEAD," i.e., He is the Head of the body, namely, the Church. Lastly, it means "FIRST-FRUIT"; He is First-Fruits, first-begotten of the dead. Hence it follows that in all senses He is the Fulfiller of the meaning of...}
(Col 1:16-18). It is through Him that the work of reconciliation is made "by the blood of his cross" (vs. 20).

If as Redeemer Jesus is also Creator, as Creator He cannot be less than God, "for in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell" (vs. 19). The NT also affirms explicitly that He is God (John 1:1, 18; 20:28; 1 John 5:20; Titus 2:13; 2 Pet 1:1; Heb 1:8). The very fact that Jesus is called "Lord" implies His deity.\(^1\)

If the deity of Jesus, as defined by the NT and accepted by historical Christianity, is denied, the result will be either Unitarianism, in which the knowledge of God is by reason and not by divine revelation (since it does not admit the self-revelation of God in Jesus Christ), or Pantheism, which despoils the person of Christ of His uniqueness since it admits some kind of God's self-revelation in every man.\(^2\) In any case the expiatory sacrifice of Jesus is undermined in its efficacy and completeness.\(^3\) As F. Pieper remarks,


\(^1\)"It would seem evident that no human being, however exalted his nature or full his inspiration, could be made Lord of all. That relation to the world must rest on his intrinsic qualities as superhuman and divine" (Mackenzie, p. 73). See also Roark, p. 107: "In addressing Jesus as Lord, they recognized in him the attribute of divinity"; and Maurice Wiles: "To call Jesus 'Lord' is to give him that divine name whose glory Yahweh had declared should not be shared with any other." The Making of Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), p. 64.

\(^2\)See Roark, pp. 112, 113.

\(^3\)As we shall see, Jehovah's Witnesses' unitarianism leads them to understand the sacrifice of Jesus merely as something that
All deniers of the deity of Christ consistently deny the satisfaction vicaria. . . . Only because of His deity (Gal 4:4, 5; Rom 5:10; 1 John 1:7) could Jesus provide a satisfaction for us. If He were a mere man, He would need all His righteousness for Himself, no matter how "absolutely" and "singularly" He is under the "influence" of God. His suffering and death, so say the deniers of His deity, can only induce men to put forth their own virtuous endeavors and thus to effect their reconciliation with God. ¹

However, as we have considered, the nature of sin and the condition of man in sin required a divine Savior. Precisely because Christ is a member of the Godhead He can offer an adequate atonement in behalf of the sinners. This is well set forth by E. J. Waggoner:

Indeed, the fact that Christ is a part of the Godhead, possessing all the attributes of Divinity, being the equal of the Father in all respects, as Creator and Lawgiver, is the only force there is in the atonement. It is this alone which makes redemption a possibility. Christ died "that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18); but if He lacked one iota of being equal to God, He could not bring us to Him. Divinity means having the attributes of Deity. If Christ were not Divine, then we should have only a human sacrifice. It matters not, even if it be granted that Christ was the highest

¹Pieper, 2:356.
created intelligence in the universe; in that case He would be a subject, owing allegiance to the law, without ability to do any more than His own duty. He could have no righteousness to impart to others. There is an infinite distance between the highest angel ever created, and God; therefore the highest angel could not lift fallen man up, and make him partaker of the Divine nature. Angels can minister; God only can redeem. Thanks be to God that we are saved "through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and who is, therefore, able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.

The Incarnation

The incarnation, the unfathomable miracle of God, was also imperative for man's salvation. "He had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people" (Heb 2:17). Such an expiation could only be performed on the basis of His own sacrifice which was possible because He adopted human nature. \(^2\) "Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage" (vss. 14, 15).

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\(^2\) Robert I. Wilberforce says: "The incarnation" is the "great objective fact of Christianity. . . . Our Lord's mediation is built upon His participation in man's nature. For such participation was essential to that one sacrifice upon the cross, on which rests the efficacy . . . of His own intercession at the heavenly altar, so also has His human nature become the channel through which all gifts of grace are bestowed upon men. . . . His incarnation is a central point, from which we may approach the eternity which preceded it, as well as that which follows it," cited by Harry W. Lowe, "Thoughts on the Incarnation," Ministry 30 (December 1957):6.
God is immortal, He cannot die. But death is a characteristic of humanity. So He needed to assume humanity. "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory of the only Son from the Father" (John 1:14). God became man in order to save man.¹

The very term incarnation presupposes a form of existence of Jesus prior to His birth. We are told that this same Word that became flesh "was in the beginning with God" and "was God" (vss. 1, 2). Jesus was conscious of His previous existence when He prayed: "Father, glorify thou me in thy own presence with the glory which I had with thee before the world was made" (17:5). It is evident here that, as God, Jesus partook of the unity of God in His pre-existence, since Isaiah declares that the Lord God gives His glory to no other (Isa 42:8). This same prophet saw the glory of God in the vision of chap. 6: "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne. . ." (vs. 1). And the Fourth Gospel affirms explicitly that Isaiah saw the glory of Christ (John 12:41).² Therefore Jesus was God in Heaven before His birth.

However, as we have already seen, it was still as God that Jesus came to save man. A Savior less than divine would be insufficient to solve the problem of sin. Thus the incarnation

¹ Gregory Nazianzen (fourth century), in combating heresies that denied the completeness of the incarnation, said: "What has not been assumed cannot be restored; it is what is united with God that is saved," cited by J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1968), p. 297. Origen had already affirmed: "The whole man would not have been saved unless Christ had taken upon him the whole man," cited by Wiles, p. 103.

² This Johannine statement is made in the context of Isaiah's vision (see vss. 39, 40).
did not strip Him of His divine status. The incarnation only added to Him a new and necessary element for man's salvation: human nature. So, it is correct to think of Jesus as a person with two natures: divine and human. He is, in fact, very God and very man.

Such a union, known as hypostasis, was providential for

1 E. G. White confirms this fact: "In Christ, divinity and humanity were combined. Divinity was not degraded to humanity: divinity held its place" (SDABC [1957 ed.], 5:1082).

This fact is crucial for the understanding of incarnation. We must recognize the incarnation as a process of addition and not of subtraction. William G. T. Shedd says: "In saying that 'the Word was made flesh' (John 1:14), it is meant that the Word came to possess human characteristics in addition to his divine, which still remained as before. The properties of the divine nature cannot be either destroyed or altered. A human nature was united with the divine, in order that the resulting person might have a human form of consciousness as well as a divine. . . . The incarnate Logos can think and feel either like God, or like man; he has two modes or forms of consciousness." Dogmatic Theology (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, Classic Reprint Edition, 1953), 2:267.

Karl Barth noted: "From the reality of Jesus Christ we gather that revelation is possible on God's side, that God is free for us, in such a way that His Word by becoming man at the same time is and remains what He is, the true and eternal God, the same as He is in Himself at the Father's right hand for ever and ever. The kenosis, passion, humiliation which He takes upon Himself by becoming man, signifies no loss in divine majesty but, considered in the light of its goal, actually its triumph. . . . In the incarnation we do not have to do with a lessening in the divinity of the eternal Word. . . . He who in the third day rose from the dead was no less true God in the manger than on the cross. By becoming flesh the Word is no less true and entire God than He was previously in eternity in Himself." Church Dogmatics 1/2:37, 38. B. F. Westcott speaks of the One who "came down from heaven, even He who being incarnate is the Son of man, without ceasing to be what He was before." The Gospel According to St. John (Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954), 1:116. Leon Morris affirms: "We must surely hold that the incarnation meant the adding of something to what the Word was doing, rather than the cessation of most of His activities. . . . The incarnation represents not a diminution of His function, but an addition to them." The Gospel According to John, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971), pp. 114, 224.
the fulfillment of the plan of redemption. On the one hand, man
could be saved only through death (1 Pet 1:18, 19; John 1:29);\(^1\)
and mortality is proper of human nature. On the other hand, if
Jesus were a mere man, His sacrifice, made possible because He was
man, could not pay the infinite price for man's redemption. As
Parl L. Mellenbruch remarks, "Had He been God only, He could not have
taken upon Himself our sins nor could He have died for us. Had He
been man only, His death would have been of too little value for
more than Himself or at best for one other man."\(^2\) Finitude had to
be bound to infinitude in order that man might be saved. The
incarnation provided such a connection. Jesus, holding both divine
and human natures, was able to endure the penalty of sin for all
mankind.

It is evident here that we must acknowledge as correct the
Christological doctrine of *genus majestaticum*: there is a transfer
of properties from one nature to another for the fulfillment of
expiatory acts. In this way Jesus was enabled

for the completion of the redemptive work far in excess and
beyond the limits of normal human nature. . . . When Christ
according to the human nature suffered and died, the divine
nature was at hand sustaining the human nature as it bore the
assumed guilt of humanity. The divine nature communicated its
power and worth to the sacrifice and appropriated to itself the
suffering endured by the human nature. Thus was the atonement
given an infinite value. Had there been no cooperation
between the two natures in the redemptive process, there would
have been either a mere human sacrifice of too little value to
redeem mankind or a divine act detached from human relationships

\(^1\) Cf. Heb 9:22: "Without the shedding of blood there is no
forgiveness of sins"; see also vss. 15-17.

\(^2\) P. L. Mellenbruch, *The Doctrines of Christianity* (New York:
and hence valueless for human redemption. The redemptive process had to make contact with both the divine and human natures.¹

E. G. White confirms this fact by saying:

Man has not been made a sin-bearer, and he will never know the horror of the curse of sin which the Savior bore. No sorrow can bear any comparison with the sorrow of Him upon whom the wrath of God fell with overwhelming force. Human nature can endure but a limited amount of test and trial. The finite can only endure the finite measure, and human nature succumbs; but the nature of Christ had a greater capacity for suffering; for the human existed in the divine nature, and created a capacity for suffering to endure that which resulted from the sins of a lost world.²

So Jesus, as perfect God and perfect man, was enabled to offer a perfect sacrifice "once and for all" (Heb 7:27; 10:10).

The two natures of Jesus also provide the efficacy of His mediatorial work. In order to be our high priest in Heaven he needed to be like us (Heb 2:17). Paul is explicit in his statement that "there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim 2:5). Through the incarnation the infinite gap between God and man, caused by sin, is bridged and man is restored to the fellowship with God. "By His divinity He lays hold upon the throne of heaven, while by His humanity He reaches us."³ "In Christ the family of earth and the family of heaven are bound together. Christ glorified is our brother. Heaven is enshrined in humanity, and humanity is enfolded in the bosom of Infinite Love."⁴

¹Ibid., pp. 72, 73.
²SDABC (1957 ed.), 5:1103.
⁴Ibid., pp. 25, 26.
The work of judgment is also attached to the incarnation. Jesus has "authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of man" (John 5:27).

**He Never Sinned**

The sinlessness of Jesus is affirmed throughout the NT. "Which of you convicts me of sin?" (John 8:46). His sinlessness characterizes the uniqueness of His humanity. "We have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15). His conscience never accused Him of having yielded to temptation. He never needed to say "I am sorry." Never did He profer a prayer of repentance. His baptism was "to fulfill all righteousness" and not for confession of sin.

However, His sinlessness is not restricted to the non-practice of sin. Paul says that He "Himself knew nothing of sin" (2 Cor 5:21, Moffat). This means that Jesus neither committed sin nor possessed a sinful nature. We cannot place Jesus on the same level as sinful

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1 See also John 8:29; 14:30; 1 John 3:5; Heb 4:15; 7:26; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:20.

2 "Christ submits to an ordinance of God and is in this respect no exception. He belongs to this people and has come to do the will of the Father. Hence he wishes to receive baptism, too, and this does not mean that he himself has succumbed to the power of sin and therefore needs the baptism of repentance. But he is bound to this people and thus bound he will bear its guilt." G. C. Berkouwer, The Person of Christ (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955), p. 245.

3 "Sin had not become known experimentally to the moral consciousness of Jesus; it was to Him, because non-existent in Him, a thing unknown from His own experience." Heinrich A. W. Meyer, Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Corinthians (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, Publishers, 1884), p. 539.
man. He was the immaculate Son of God. "For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens" (Heb 7:26).

It had to be so that He might be our Savior. The Bible declares that "the wages of sin is death" (Rom 6:23). Had He had the least trace of sin and He would have to die for Himself. But being undefiled and living a life of absolute justice, He was the very embodiment of God's righteousness: He was righteousness itself. H. Meyer says that "This was the necessary postulate for His accomplishing work of reconciliation."\(^1\) The only reason He had to die was that our sinful nature and sins were ascribed to Him. Now when we believe on Him, His perfect and righteous life is reckoned on our account and we are justified before God.\(^2\) Through this process He "who knew no sin" [and is therefore the righteousness of God] is made our sin and pays our debt, and we, who have known every sin, "become the righteousness of God" (2 Cor 5:21).\(^3\)

\(^1\)Meyer, p. 539.

\(^2\)"By fulfilling the whole Law, Christ acquired all the merits and rewards promised those who live according to the Law. Having acquired these merits and rewards it follows that Christ can now bestow them on whomsoever He will" (Mellenbruch, p. 92).

\(^3\)"The justification of a sinner includes a title to eternal life, as well as deliverance from condemnation. . . . Eternal life, as a reward, rests upon perfect obedience of the law. Had man rendered this obedience, he could claim the reward. He has not rendered it and hence cannot claim it. . . . Christ, the God-man, has perfectly obeyed the law; God gratuitously imputes this obedience to the believer; and the believer now has a right and title to the eternal life and blessedness founded upon Christ's theantropic obedience. This is the second part of justification; the first part being the right and title to exemption from the penalty of the law, founded upon Christ's atoning sacrifice. Justification thus includes the imputation of Christ's obedience as well as of his suffering" (Shedd, 2:547).
He Died for Our Sins

The uniqueness of Jesus' death lies in the reason why He died. He did not die merely as a martyr or even as a hero who dies for his cause or ideal. Paul states "that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures" (1 Cor 15:3). Probably the apostle has in mind the figure of the Suffering Servant of Isa 53: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities... The Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. ... He was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. ... He makes Himself an offering for sin" (vss. 5, 6, 8, 10). Peter, having Isa 53 as background, says: "He Himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness" (1 Pet 2:24), and: "For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteousness, that He might bring us to God" (3:18).

All of these passages give the death of Christ a substitutionary and vicarious sense: He dies in our behalf and place. Certain

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E. G. White describes the outward aspect of Jesus' death in these terms: "It was the most shameful, the most cruel—the death upon the cross as a malefactor. He did not die as a hero in the eyes of the world, loaded with honors, as men in battle. He died as a condemned criminal, suspended between the heavens and the earth—died a lingering death of shame, exposed to the tauntings and revilings of a debased crime-loaded, profligate multitude!" (SDABC, 5:1127). The inward aspect and its broader sense is so described: "Christ was to die as man's substitute. Man was a criminal under the sentence of death for transgression of the law of God, as a traitor, a rebel; hence a substitute for man must die as a malefactor, because He stood in the place of the traitors, with all their treasured sins upon His divine soul... All this humiliation of the Majesty of heaven was for guilty, condemned man. He went lower, and lower in His humiliation, until there were no lower depths that He could reach, in order to lift man up from his moral defilement... He died to make an atonement" (ibid., pp. 1127, 1128).
biblical key words used by the NT writers in regard to the process of salvation are closely linked to the death of Jesus. Some of these follow:

Redemption, related to the idea of liberation, deliverance, and ransom, bears the etymological meaning of a price paid for liberation of slaves or prisoners of war. Redeemed from sin are those who "were bought with a price" (1 Cor 6:20), "the precious blood of Christ" (1 Pet 1:18, 19).

Justification is almost an exclusive Pauline term to indicate the glorious experience through which man receives forgiveness of his sins and is declared righteous by God. Obviously righteousness by faith is related to the sacrifice of Jesus. "We are now justified by his blood" (Rom 5:9). As we saw, by virtue of His death His life of justice is ascribed to us as we believe in Him, while our sins are charged on his account. The penalty of our sins is paid and we have peace with God (5:1). This is the forensic aspect of justification.

Sanctification is another term related to the death of Christ. He "loved the church and gave himself up for her that he might sanctify her" (Eph 5:25; see also Heb 13:12). Sanctification defines a process made possible through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer and establishes the ethical aspect of justification.

1"The justification theme is virtually peculiar to St. Paul, although the basic idea which Paul is expounding by means of it is fundamental to the whole NT and was first enunciated by Jesus Himself" (Richardson, p. 232). On the other hand Paul rarely employs the noun forgiveness or the verb to forgive in his writings. But it is undeniable that the act of God forgiving the sinner is implicit in his doctrine of righteousness by faith.
justification by faith, through which the sinner is made righteous (Rom 5:19). This fact leads us to the inevitable conclusion that ethical justification depends upon and is only possible through the forensic justification.

Reconciliation (Rom 5:11) defines the experience through which man is brought out of his state of strangeness and alienation to peace and fellowship with God (Eph 2:11-19). Naturally we are "reconciled to God by the death of his Son" (Rom 5:10).

Propitiation comes from the Greek ἀπολογία and ἀποφθέγμα (1 John 2:2; 4:10, KJV, and Rom 3:25, KJV) which is also rendered by expiation (see RSV of the texts just cited). The meaning is that of appeasement and as employed by Paul is linked to the idea of God's wrath referred to in Rom 1:17. To our understanding both

1Cf. Bloesch, p. 151: "It is not enough to be pronounced just: we must also be made just in our hearts and in our daily living." On p. 228 he says: "Faith alone justifies and regenerates us, but faith working through love sanctifies us (Gal 5:6). We are engrafted into the righteousness of Christ by faith, but we become righteous in personal life through works of love (Phil 1:9-11)."

2"Scripture tells us that all morality--about which the opponents of the juridical conception of the world's reconciliation are so concerned--springs from these purely juridical processes. Only after a man has been justified in this purely juridical manner, only after he has obtained justification by believing in the God 'that justifieth the ungodly' (Rom 4:5), does he love God and his neighbor; only then he begins to keep God's law. Make reconciliation and justification an 'ethical' instead of a purely 'juridical' matter, and you have not only made justification impossible ('for as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse', Gal 3:10), but you have also destroyed the foundation of sanctification ('For sin shall not have dominion over you, for ye are not under the law, but under grace', Rom 6:14)" (Pieper, 2:355).

3G. Eldon Ladd says, "By virtue of the death of Christ, man is rescued from death; he is acquitted of his guilt and is justified; a reconciliation is accomplished because of which the wrath of God no longer need be feared. The death of Christ has saved the believer from the wrath of God so that he may look forward no longer to God's
the ideas of propitiation and expiation are valid. "Propitiation has reference to the bearing or effect of satisfaction upon God. Expiation has reference to the bearing of the same satisfaction upon the guilt of sin."\(^1\) The point is that God is appeased in His wrath precisely because the sin of man is expiated. "Surely the very idea of expiation in and of itself leads to propitiation! If there must be expiation, why must there be propitiation? There is only one answer—-that there cannot be a true relationship between God and man until that sin has been expiated. But that is just another way of saying propitiation."\(^2\)

However, we need to be careful lest we take the divine wrath on account of a vengeful God eager to punish man because of his sins. God's indignation against sin is just as far as the holiness of His character is concerned.\(^3\) But the same God who hates sin with all the wrath but to life (1 Thess 5:9). The guilt and the doom of sin have been borne by Christ; the wrath of God has been propitiated." A Theology of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), pp. 431, 432.

\(^1\)Archibald A. Hodge, The Atonement (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1867), p. 184. This means that the best translation for ἔξοστάρως in 1 John 2:2 would be expiation. Hodge goes on to say: "The word ἔξοστάρως [verbal form of ἔξοστάριστον] when construed with God, evidently and confessedly is used by both classical writers and the Seventy in the sense of propitiation; but when it is construed with sin, it can only be used in the sense of expiation" (ibid.).

\(^2\)D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Romans, An Exposition of Chapters 3:20-4:25 (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1970), p. 77. C. K. Barrett also observes: "It would be wrong to neglect the fact that expiation has, as it were, the effect of propitiation: the sin that might justly have excited God's wrath is expiated (at God's will), and therefore no longer does so" (Romans, p. 78).

\(^3\)"His holiness forbade Him to treat it [sin] lightly. That He would forsake His Son [on the cross] shows the ethical intensity of the redemptive work" (Earle, p. 140).
fibers of His being loves the sinner in such a way "that he gave his only Son" to expiate the "sins of the whole world" (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2). The cross is the consequence and not the cause of God's love.¹

He Was Raised from the Dead

The resurrection of Jesus has four crucial implications for Christian faith:

The Resurrection Is Crucial for the Economy of Salvation

Emil Brunner says that "on the resurrection everything else depends."² Christ could have been God, as He always was, and submitted Himself to the process of incarnation, living a human, sinless life and dying on the cross, as He did. But if He had not been resurrected, everything He did would have been of no profit for us. Our life, like His mission on earth, would end in the tomb. "If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished" (1 Cor 15:17, 18). Without the resurrection, the Gospel, "the power of God for salvation" (Rom 1:16), would have come to nought. "Without the message of the resurrection of Jesus, that of his redeeming death is nothing."³ In fact Paul states: "If Christ

¹"God's attitude toward man does change in the light of the sacrifice of Christ, but this change was already apparent in his own eternal decision to identify himself with the sins of man and to bear the penalty of these sins" (Bloesch, 1:160).


³Ibid., p. 132. Cf. Earle, p. 142: "The whole redemptive scheme would have fallen apart without it."
has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain" (1 Cor 15:14).

Why is the resurrection so crucial for Christian faith? We are told that through His death Christ destroyed "him who has the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb 2:14). This means salvation for the sinner. But if Jesus was not raised what assurance do we have that He really triumphed over death? If death kept Him in the grave, how can He be "the resurrection and life," the bestower of eternal life to those who believe in Him? (John 11:25). Therefore if Christ's resurrection has not taken place, the entire mission of His life and death has failed and the process of salvation is a farce.

"But in fact," says the apostle, "Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep" (1 Cor 15:20). He is the first fruit of His own victory on the cross. He did destroy the power of death, and this fact made death incapable of holding Him (Acts 2:24). The resurrection thus vindicates all of Christ's words and works (the work at Calvary, in particular) and attests them as true and effectual. "The resurrection of Jesus proved that His sacrifice for sins had been accepted."2

So the importance of Christ's resurrection can hardly be


2Earle, p. 141.
exaggerated. It is the key stone, "the living centre and object of Christian faith."\textsuperscript{1}

The Resurrection Is Crucial for the Christological Understanding of Jesus

Carmody and Carmody observe that "Dying, Jesus showed that he was fully human. Resurrected, he showed that he was deathless, and so divine."\textsuperscript{2} Paul states that He was "designated Son of God in Power according to the Spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead" (Rom 1:4). His resurrection became a confession of faith (Rom 10:9) expressed in sermons, hymns, and prayers\textsuperscript{3}--as we can observe in Acts,\textsuperscript{4} in the epistles, and in the Fourth Gospel. Such a confession reveals an ongoing apprehension of the exalted nature and position of Jesus. Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36), the Holy and Righteous One, the Author of life (3:14), the only Savior (4:12).

\textsuperscript{1}Richardson, p. 197. The very fact that Christianity exists is sufficient evidence that Christ's resurrection is a real fact. This author affirms further: "The event of the resurrection can account for the rise of the Christian faith; but how can we ever explain the origin of the belief that Israel's historic destiny has been fulfilled by the hypothesis of a Messiah who suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried, and whose corpse lay mouldering in a grave owned by one of the members of the Sanhedrin? The events precede the faith and account for its rise; it cannot be the faith which gave rise to myths and legends about fictitious events; a cause can explain an effect, but an effect will not explain a cause." The Bible in the Age of Science (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), p. 173.

\textsuperscript{2}Carmody and Carmody, p. 35; cf. Earle, p. 143: "It is one of the main proofs of the deity of Jesus."

\textsuperscript{3}Seen Bornkamm, pp. 188, 189.

\textsuperscript{4}The central place the resurrection occupies in Acts is seen in the first chapter where the replacement of Judas must be made by a witness of this fact (vs. 22). The various discourses and other events reported in this book are frequently linked to the resurrection (2:22-36; 3:13-26; 4:2; 5:29-32, and so on).
Leader, Savior, and Giver of repentance (5:31), the Son of Man at the right hand of God (7:55), Lord of all (10:36), Son of God (Rom 1:4), Creator (Col 1:15-20), our Great God (Titus 2:13), and God with God since the beginning (John 1:1, 2) are expressions denoting this progressive acknowledgment of attributes of the glorified Christ. "It is vain," William N. Clark says, "to imagine that the first disciples could know their master perfectly at once, for even the divine Spirit cannot dispense with the element of time in guiding human beings into truth."  

We can observe, for example, that at the end of the first century, when the Johannine writings emerged, the deity of Jesus and His equality and unity with the Father were fully recognized (John 1:1; 5:18; 10:30; 1 John 5:20).^1 But we can hardly deny that the resurrection, many years before, had evidenced this Christological fact in an incontestable manner (20:28).^2

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1 Clark, p. 10. That the revelation of Jesus was really final, absolute, and complete we can deduce from Heb 1:2, where the author employs the first aorist of λαλέω to speak of God's action in Jesus, and from John 15:15: "All that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you." However, we need to take into account that the human appropriation of such a revelation is progressive. See B. F. Westcott, The Epistle to the Hebrews (London: Macmillan and Company, 1903), p. 7. There is both the sense of completed revelation and ongoing revelation (cf. John 16:12, 13). In the case of the apostles this process of comprehension of the person and work of Jesus became possible through the direction of the Holy Spirit who, according to His promise, would bring to their remembrance all that He had said, and would declare to them things that were still to come (John 14:26; 16:13). In fact, the Holy "Spirit is nothing other than the continuing presence and revelation of Jesus to his followers." D. Moody Smith, "The Presentation of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel," Interpretation 31 (October 1977):376.

2 Passages explicitly calling Jesus "God" are discussed in chapter 4.

3 John Knox comments on the progressive comprehension that culminates with the full recognition of His deity, saying: "It is clear that theological interest in Jesus' earthly life began with the
The Resurrection Is Crucial for the Experience of Salvation

A real experience of the salvation provided by the gospel is crucially related to both the death and resurrection of Jesus. "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried, therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:3, 4).

Generally baptism is thought of as a symbol of the death and resurrection of Jesus. But baptism has to do more with realities than with symbols. As A. Nygren says, "That which baptism symbolizes also death and resurrection and moved backward. The earliest gospel preaching was dominated by these two events--or this one twofold event--as the quotation from Peter's sermon reminds us. But Mark, twenty-five years or so later, although he devotes half his space to the passion and events which immediately led up to it, gives also a summary account of Jesus' earlier career, beginning with his baptism--a career laden with supernatural significance. Matthew opens with the miraculous birth; and Luke makes an even earlier beginning, with the miraculous birth of John the Baptist, the forerunner of Jesus. In none of these Gospels does the doctrine of pre-existence clearly appear. When we notice, then, that the Fourth Gospel begins not with the baptism and birth, but with the eternal Logos, who "was in the beginning with God," it is not unnatural to decide that belief in the pre-existence of Jesus was the culmination of a process of exalting the earthly career which began with the fact of the resurrection and moved backward step by step till not only the whole of the earthly life was included but a divine pre-existence was affirmed as well." Jesus Lord and Christ (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1958), pp. 145, 146.

There is therefore an element of progress in the understanding of the person of Christ by the apostolic church through a retrospective reflection upon His earthly life. However, it is difficult to overlook the existence of a prospective reflection through which present and future eschatological realities having in the resurrection their basis are likewise grasped. Anyway the resurrection is the central point from which a new dimension in the understanding of Christ is achieved. "It is the resurrected Christ, therefore, who first reveals the mystery of his history and his person, and above all the meaning of his suffering and death" (Bornkamm, p. 185).
actually happens." Baptism not only represents but, in fact, seals our being united to Christ through faith. In the moment we are united to Christ our experience of salvation becomes real.

That is why the resurrection is an essential fact. "For if we have been united with him in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection" (vs. 5 NIV). Paul repeats this truth when he says to the church of Colossae: "You were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead" (Col 2:12). ". . . Through faith . . ." indicates that baptism merely as an external act has no value, and that it has to be fruit of the faith by which we are justified and accepted by God. Such faith is saving because like that of Abraham who believed in the God who gives life to the dead (Rom 4:17, 19; Heb 12:17, 18) and was justified, here we are also led to believe in the God "who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Rom 4:24, 25).

When Christ died on the cross the power of death came to an end. His resurrection is a proof of this fact. He entered the "valley of the shadow of death" and came out of it victoriously. He opened the way to life. Now all the sinner has to do is to follow the footsteps of the Master, that is, to die with Christ in order to be raised with Him. Thus Christ's victory becomes his victory. "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15:57), Paul states in speaking of the final

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1 Nygren, Romans, p. 233.
resurrection. But such a triumphant exclamation is applicable to the condition of the believer now. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ... neither death, nor life" (Rom 8:35, 38). To die with Christ to sin is really to live with Christ to justice (6:11), and this means eternal life (Rom 6:20-23; Gal 6:8). The passions of the flesh in which we were dead (Eph 2:1, 3, 5) were crucified with Him (Gal 5:24) so that we can now live with Christ (Rom 6:6, 8).

Therefore if it is true that in Christ all men died because of His objective act of dying for all (2 Cor 5:14), it is also true that only those who partake of the subjective experience of dying with Him are raised with Him for a new life. "As Representative of a fallen race, he encompasses all humanity, both saved and lost," but "as representative of the new humanity Jesus Christ includes in his body only believers."¹ The old man needs to die in order that the new one may live. "Put off your old nature ... and put on the new nature, created after the likeness of God" (Eph 4:23, 24). Christ Himself is the reality of this new nature. "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal 3:27).

Thus those who died with Christ live "in Christ" and Christ lives in them (Gal 2:20). By being "in Christ" they enjoy the status of members of His body, the Church, the new humanity of which He, as the last Adam, is the Head. "If one is in Christ, he is a new Creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come"

¹Bloesch, 2:228.
(2 Cor 5:17). The New Age has dawned for them\(^1\) and they have passed from death to life. They have been raised with Christ.

The Resurrection Is Crucial for the Understanding of Present and Future Eschatological Realities

The presence of Christ on earth introduced the eschatological time foreseen by the latter prophets of the OT and brought in the expected New Age. This is particularly true in regard to His death and resurrection. The resurrection is at the same time the intervention of God's new world in this old world branded with sin and death, the setting up and beginning of his kingdom. An event in this time and this world, and yet at the same time an event which puts an end and a limit to this time and this world.\(^2\)

G. E. Ladd has observed that eschatological events are not limited to the future only, but they are in fact "redemptive events that have

\(^1\)Cf. Richardson, Bible, p. 182: "Christians are baptized that they too may enter through death and resurrection into the new life of the Age to Come."

\(^2\)Bornkamm, p. 184; cf. Nygren, Romans, pp. 234, 235: "In the resurrection of Christ the new aeon began... Through baptism we have been received into the new age, which began in the resurrection of Christ." However, we must not overpass the fact that the Kingdom of God was already present in the earthly ministry of Jesus (Matt 12:28; Luke 17:20, 21). We have already referred to the meaning of θαυμάζειν in Jesus' message inaugural of His ministry: "The Kingdom of God is at hand" (see above p. 15, n. 2). Even Paul, who emphasizes the resurrection of Jesus as the great eschatological act of God, understands that the incarnation took place "when the time had fully come" (Gal 4:4). Perhaps it would be better to take the ministry of Jesus, His death, resurrection and exaltation to Heaven as a single event. W. H. Rigg, for example, commenting on the theology of sin and its atonement in the Fourth Gospel, says: "The giving of the Son is not exclusively associated with the cross; His death is not viewed in isolation from the rest of His life, it is organically connected with what goes before as well as with that which follows after. The gift of the Son was not confined to one specific event, but all through His life He was giving Himself." The Fourth Gospel and Its Message for Today (London: Lutterworth Press, 1952), p. 125. In short, the New Age has dawned in this world with Christ.
already begun to unfold within history."¹ He classifies as
eschatological events: the death of Christ, His resurrection,
and the status of the believer "in Christ."

Indeed man's experience in God's salvation, as we have
previously analyzed, is to be understood under eschatological
perspective. "The believer has already experienced death and
resurrection (Rom 6:3, 4). He has been raised with Christ and
exalted to heaven (Eph 2:6), sharing the resurrection and
ascension life of his Lord."² However, the Old Age still persists.
In Christ the New Age has broken into history to coexist with the
Old until the final consummation. Until there the believer is a
citizen of two worlds. He enjoys already the life of the Kingdom,
the eternal life (John 3:36; 5:24; 6:47), spiritual in character
and nature, and still lives "in the flesh," surrounded by all the
forms of appeal to sin.³ Although he is not of this world he is
yet in this world and needs to be kept from evil (John 17:14-16).
Consequently the experience of dying and being raised with Christ
is to occur continuously in his life. Paul said: "I die every
day" (1 Cor 15:31); "always carrying in the body the death of Jesus,
so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies"
(2 Cor 5:10). Although these words are written in the context of
persecution, they are adequately applicable to the situation of the
believer amidst the tension of these two worlds, for he also said:
"I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I

¹Ladd, Theology, p. 551. ²Ibid. ³Thence the struggle between flesh and Spirit mentioned by
Paul in Gal 5:17 and vividly represented in Rom 7 is understandable.
myself should be disqualified" (1 Cor 9:27).

In such a situation Jesus' resurrection is still a source of power to the believer. "If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God" (Col 3:1). Because of the exalted position Christ occupies in heaven, He can put all the resources of the New Age within the believer's reach. Then the believer himself can "with confidence draw near to the throne of grace" in order to "receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb 4:16).

The entrance of the glorified Christ into heaven "to appear in the presence of God on our behalf" (Heb 9:24) is likewise an eschatological event. As W. Douglas Mackenzie says, "The day of subordinate mediators is done with."\(^1\) Through His sacerdotal ministry Jesus can constantly apply the benefits of His work at Calvary to our individual cases today, two thousand years after the cross. His sacerdotal work is in fact the immortalization of Calvary and makes effective our experience in God's salvation. Through it the Spirit is bestowed in a measure sufficient to permit a victorious Christian life.

Finally, His resurrection is related to the eschatological consummation in the future. Christ is "the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep . . . then at his coming those who belong to Christ" (1 Cor 15:20, 23). The certainty of the Second Coming of Jesus is grounded in the solid base of His resurrection. "For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus,

\(^1\)Mackenzie, p. 23.
God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. . . . For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel's call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first" (1 Thess 4:14, 16).

The resurrection of the dead is not an exclusively future event. It has already taken place. G. E. Ladd says:

The resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of those who belong to Christ constitute two parts of a single entity, two acts in a single drama, two stages of a single process. The temporal relationship is unimportant. It matters not how long an interval of time intervenes between these two stages of the resurrection. . . . Jesus' resurrection is . . . the beginning of the eschatological resurrection itself.1

Indeed the NT declares that the end of this Age has arrived in Jesus (1 Pet 1:20; 1 Cor 7:29, 31; 10:11; 1 John 2:17). His death and resurrection are as much eschatological events as His Second Coming and the final resurrection. The eschatological consummation is only a question of time, which for us can become disturbing, but not so for God. "The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness" (2 Pet 3:9). His plan is being fulfilled and His purpose will be fully reached. In this certainty the believer founds his hope.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (Rom 8:22-25)

We are told that the prophets from of old "were inspired to understand God's action in the events of their people's history and

1Ladd, Theology, p. 326.
in the crises of their own days, so that they could assert with confidence the pattern and plan of God's judgment and salvation in the time to come.¹ With the Christian church it is not different. We can with faith and security look forward to that day when God will complete His work of Redemption and all the things will be restored, in the view of that which He has already done in the past and does now. The events linked to Calvary, to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, and to the upper room that day of Pentecost proclaim in loud voice that the future has already begun and that He who began His good work "will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil 1:6).

Conclusion

We have briefly analysed the biblical data regarding Jesus' person and work. He is the God-man who lived a perfect sinless life, who paid the infinite price of sin through His sacrifice, who was raised and exalted to the right hand of God for us. "Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:25). Soon He will come again to take His people to the Father's house and to conclude God's plan of salvation. A Christ lesser than this, who has done less than this, cannot solve the problem of sin.

Francis Pieper, commenting on the various theories of atonement that culminate in making man's effort the means of his own reconciliation with God, which are therefore different from what

¹Richardson, Bible, p. 177.
the Bible presents, classifies the teaching on this important subject in two classes: The Christian teaching and the unchristian teaching. Then he says:

Just as there are only two essentially different teachings on the Person of Christ, one which teaches the *unio personalis*, while all the other teachings in their various modifications deny it, so here one will either teach or deny the objective reconciliation. And if the objective reconciliation of all men with God, effected by the vicarious life, suffering, and death of Christ, is denied, the foundation of the Christian doctrine is destroyed.¹

This same author also affirms that "All the deniers of the deity of Christ consistently deny the *satisfactio vicaria*,"² the doctrine according to which the expiatory work of Jesus is the only sufficiency for our reconciliation with God and for our salvation. Once more we can see the close relationship between Christology and Soteriology.³ A misunderstanding of the twofold nature of Jesus leads to an incorrect apprehension of His saving work. In the beginning it was so and today it would not be different. In the time of Paul, Christian Judaizers, which organized the formation of the Ebionite party denying the deity of Christ, tried to introduce another gospel by which man had to contribute to his salvation. "Let such gospel be accursed," the apostle said (Gal 1:6-9). Later, at the end of the first century, Docetism, denying the perfect human nature of Christ, was, with its

¹Pieper, 2:360. ²Ibid., p. 356.
³Even Charles T. Russell, founder of the Jehovah's Witnesses, declared: "In proportion as we value the work of the Atonement--our reconciliation to God, and the sacrifice for sin through which it is accomplished--in the same proportion will we esteem him whom the Heavenly Father set forth to be the propitiation for our sins, our Restorer and Lifegiver." Studies in the Scriptures, 7 vols. (New York: International Bible Students Association, 1920), 5:83.
spiritualistic concepts of salvation, equally repelled as a movement imbued of the spirit of antichrist (1 John 4:5). In reality both those movements were antichristian. Both tried to replace the true Christ by another of human imagination, unable to save perfectly, and that needed therefore some human contribution.

In our days some ancient heresies have been revived. They need to be confronted again with the true Gospel. One example, it seems to us, is the Christology held by Jehovah's Witnesses. This is discussed in the next chapter.
CHAPTER III

JESUS CHRIST: ALL OR PART OF SALVATION?
THE WATCHTOWER CHRISTOLOGY AND
SOTERIOLOGY

Watchtower Society\(^1\) interpretation of the person of Christ is one of the few doctrinal points that have remained basically unaltered since the nineteenth century when the movement was founded.\(^2\) A fundamentalist unitarian position has been maintained which rejects the deity of Jesus and denies his substantial equality and coeternal existence with the Father by giving him the status of a created being.

Actually, as commentators have observed, Jehovah's Witnesses constitute a contemporary revival of the fourth century heresy known as Arianism, according to which God was an absolute unity, only the Father being eternal, true, immortal, wise, good, unalterable, unchangeable, with Jesus being a perfect creature of God, having

\(^1\)Subsequent references to this organization will be generally abbreviated to Watchtower.

\(^2\)An ex-Jehovah's Witness, William J. Schnell, informs us that within a period of only eleven years, from 1917 to 1928, the Watchtower Society changed its doctrines 148 times and that this has taken place "many times later and thereafter." Into the Light of Christianity (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1959), p. 13. Indeed, doctrinal alterations have been constant among Jehovah's Witnesses. However, in regard to the person of Christ and His work of salvation they accept today, with minor variations, the same beliefs and teachings of their founder Charles T. Russell. See Walter Martin, The Kingdom of the Cults (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1981), pp. 50, 51.
come into existence before the times and the ages, therefore, neither eternally coexistent with the Father, nor having real knowledge of him, however having been employed by the Father as his instrument or agent for the creation of all other things.\footnote{See the confession of the Arians addressed to Alexander of Alexandria, in Christology of the Later Fathers, ed. Edward Rochie Hardy (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1954), pp. 332-34, and J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Creeds (New York: David McKay Company, 1972), pp. 231-34.}

About A.D. 319 Arius had already propounded "a theological system according to which Christ was neither truly God nor perfectly man" but a being with "inferior deity."\footnote{G. L. Prestige, Fathers and Heretics (London: SPCK, 1958), pp. 67, 68.} The Council of Nicaea condemned Arianism in A.D. 325 and vindicated the full divinity of Christ: He is essentially and substantially God as the Father is, and eternally co-existent with him.\footnote{Adolph Harnack recalls that if the Arian doctrine had "gained the victory, it would in all probability have ruined Christianity," cited in Jan K. Van Baalen, The Chaos of Cults (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1938), p. 143.}

By sustaining an Arian Christology, Jehovah's Witnesses have separated themselves from historical Christianity. Furthermore, their concept of salvation is set up on bases totally alien to the gospel. There is a grave misunderstanding of the grace of God and his plan of salvation, as well as a complete failure in giving Jesus the honor which is his by right. The purpose of this chapter is to substantiate these statements. We study and critique first the Christology, and then the Soteriology of Jehovah's Witnesses.
Watchtower Christology

In studying Watchtower Christology, let us review stated concepts regarding the three distinct phases of Christ's existence: before incarnation, during his earthly life, and after his resurrection.

Before Incarnation

Jehovah's Witnesses accept the pre-existence of Jesus. Russell felt that "those who hold that our Lord Jesus never had an existence until he was born a babe at Bethlehem have a very inferior view of the divine plan for man's succor." Presently this soteriological aspect of the pre-existence of Christ is still referred to. Jesus is somehow dependent upon His pre-existence to be Savior. Watchtower literature states that "by having his perfect, sinless life transferred from heaven to the womb of a Jewish virgin, Jesus was born a perfect human. . . . So, when he presented himself in full dedication to God's will, Jehovah God accepted him for sacrifice as mankind's Redeemer."^2

However, one feels that Jehovah's Witnesses, in commenting on Jesus' preexistence, are more preoccupied about stressing His inferiority in relation to the Father, than about any soteriological value of this preexistence. His eternal preexistence is never

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^Russell, 5:87.

^2 Let God Be True (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, 1952), p. 39. Most publications printed by the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of Brooklyn, New York, appear without an author. Consequently, the term "Jehovah's Witnesses believe," and similar expressions reflect this phenomenon for it is assumed the publications represent the beliefs held by the Society as a whole and not that of an individual author.
accepted. Commenting on "the beginning" of John 1:1, they say:

Since Jehovah is eternal and had no beginning . . . the Word's being with God from the "beginning" must here refer to the beginning of Jehovah's creative works. . . . Thus the Scriptures identify the Word (Jesus in his prehuman existence) as God's first creation. . . .

His eternal coexistence with the Father is denied as well as his full deity. "He was a God, but not the Almighty God, who is Jehovah. . . . Prior to coming to earth, the only begotten Son did not think of himself to be co-equal with Jehovah God."^2

The expression "only begotten Son" is applied to Jesus in the sense that he was the only direct creature of God. "He was the first and direct creation of Jehovah God. As such he was Jehovah's only begotten Son."^3 The word "firstborn" is also applied to the creation of the Son. "He is also called God's 'Firstborn'. . . . This means that he was created before all the other spirit sons of God."^4 As such, He was not God, but "a god" (John 1:1, NWT),^5 "a mighty spirit person," and "had a spirit body invisible to man."^6

His name was Michael.^7

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^1Aid to Bible Understanding (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, 1971), p. 918. To support this view, Jehovah's Witnesses do not hesitate to alter the original reading of certain texts of the NT in the NWT. ἔγω εἶμι, "I am," in John 8:58 is rendered "I have been"; τὰ ἀλλὰ τῶν, "all things," in Col 1:16, 17, 20, and ἅπας τὰ ἅπας, "all things," in vs. 17, are rendered "all other things."

^2Let God Be, pp. 33, 34.

^3The Kingdom Is at Hand (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible & Tract Society, 1944), pp. 46, 47.


^5A detailed study of this passage appears in chapter 4.

^6You Can Live, p. 58.

^7Aid, p. 1152.
In spite of the clear testimony of the NT that Jesus is the Creator, Jehovah's Witnesses only consider Jesus as an agent or instrument through whom Jehovah created everything. "The Son's share in the creative works . . . did not make him a co-creator with the Father . . . Rather . . . the Son was the agent or instrumentality through whom Jehovah, the Creator, worked."\(^1\) Since Jesus is not the Creator, everything He did does not give him more dignity than belongs to other beings in the universe, for even a human being can be an instrumentality in God's hands for the creation of something.\(^2\) Curiously, however, the Witnesses admit that the Father was talking to the Son when he said, "Let us make man in our image . . ." (Gen 1:26).\(^3\) It is difficult not to see the Son as a co-Creator here. To a mere instrument, a command would fit better: "Make man in our image . . ."--such as the words addressed to Adam and his wife: "Be fruitful and multiply . . ." (vs. 28).

According to the Witnesses, the Son was also present in the events registered in the OT, not as God Himself acting in history, but only as a representative or spokesman of God. Because of this, He is presented in John 1 as \[ \text{\textit{\textgreek{\epsilon\lambda\gamma\omicron\omicron}} or "the Word."} \] Of course, this fact likewise would not indicate any real superiority of the Son over other heavenly creatures: "This does not mean that the Word is the only angelic representative through whom Jehovah has spoken."\(^4\)

\(^1\)Ibid., p. 918.

\(^2\)Cf., for instance, the increasing of the widow's oil and the feeding of the hundred men, both performed under Elisha's command (2 Kgs 4:1-7, 42-44).

\(^3\)See Aid, p. 918.

\(^4\)Ibid.
This statement leads us to the unavoidable conclusion that for Jehovah's Witnesses Jesus in His preexistence was a mere angel among others, with the only advantage of having been created before all of them.\(^1\) If other angels also have the power to create and are equally spokesmen of God, there is no other alternative but to consider Jesus superior to them only in terms of rank and not of kind.\(^2\)

This conclusion is favored by the statement that Jesus in his preexistence did not possess immortality,\(^3\) an experience common to the other angels.\(^4\)

Endless life is dependent upon unending obedience to God. By faithful and perfect obedience the Son would live by his Father's approval and could live with him forever. The time came, however, that Jehovah God opened up to his Son the opportunity to gain immortality.\(^5\)

Two points implied in this quotation should be observed: (1) A difference is made between living forever and being immortal. The faithful angels, for example, live forever on account of their faithfulness, but they do not have immortality. (2) In Jesus' case

\(^1\) We are explicitly told that the "only begotten Son" of God was the "older heavenly, spiritual brother" of the angels. Things in Which It Is Impossible for God to Lie (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1965), p. 128.

\(^2\) We are told, for example, that by themselves, that is, not acting as creative agents of God, "some angels stopped the work that God had given them to do in heaven, and they came down to earth, and made for themselves fleshy bodies like those of human" (You Can Live, p. 93). Actually, Jehovah's Witnesses' theory of angels' materialization implies their creative power.

\(^3\) "Jehovah put the only begotten son in a superior position with respect to all other creatures." The Truth Shall Make You Free (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1943), p. 44.

\(^4\) Ibid. \(^5\) Aid, p. 824. \(^6\) Truth, p. 44.
an additional privilege was offered— an "opportunity to gain immortality," not the bestowal of immortality itself, but an opportunity to gain it. One can detect between the lines some kind of condition to be fulfilled by the Son for the full enjoyment of that opportunity. In *Let God Be True* we read:

The Scriptures definitely show that immortality belonged originally to Jehovah God alone. Christ Jesus was first to receive immortality as a reward for his faithful course on earth. . . . Immortality is a reward for faithfulness.¹

This quotation seems to imply that the opportunity for immortality came with the fall of Adam and the plan for man's salvation. By means of the Son's faithfulness in the fulfillment of such a plan² and for the vindication of Jehovah's rulership challenged by Satan,³ immortality would be bestowed upon him. Since Christ submitted to the test and was approved, he received immortality.⁴

Of Jesus' faithfulness we are told that

He did not follow the course of the Devil and plot and scheme to make himself like or equal to the Most High God and to rob God or usurp God's place. On the contrary, he showed his submission to God as his Superior by humbling himself under God's


3. To Jehovah's Witnesses the main objective for the coming of God's Son to the earth was the vindication of God's rulership. Man's salvation was a secondary purpose (*Let God Be*, pp. 29, 38).

4. "Because of Jesus' faithfulness under the most severe test, even to an ignominious death, God raised him up out of death and rewarded him by granting to him the great prize of immortality." J. F. Rutherford, *Reconciliation* (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1928), p. 79.
almighty hand, even to the most extreme degree, which means to a most disgraceful death.\(^1\)

This suggests that the Son could have sinned as Lucifer had\(^2\), for he had been created on the same level. "Because God's only begotten Son, the Word, and Lucifer were princes, being brought forth at the very beginning of all creation, they are called 'the morning stars'. For a long time they worked together."\(^3\) Lucifer was created immediately after the Word.\(^4\) Therefore, for Jehovah's Witnesses, God initially had two sons: the Word and Lucifer who, because of his rebellion, became Satan.\(^5\)

Thus the pre-incarnate Christ is presented by Jehovah's Witnesses as a heavenly being with a superior position, but essentially and substantially equal with any angel, including Lucifer.

**His Earthly Life**

To begin, let us notice that Jehovah's Witnesses deny explicitly the miracle of incarnation: "He was not an incarnation in flesh, but was flesh, a human Son of God, a perfect man, no longer

\(^{1}\)Let God Be, pp. 34, 35; see also Life Everlasting in Freedom of the Sons of God (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1966), pp. 74, 75.

\(^{2}\)See Man's Salvation, pp. 62, 63.

\(^{3}\)The New World (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1942), p. 18; see also Truth, p. 52. The very term Lucifer is applied both to Satan and to Jesus. Babylon the Great Has Fallen! God's Kingdom Rules! (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1963), pp. 314, 676.

\(^{4}\)New World, p. 17.

\(^{5}\)The logical conclusion, as Walter E. Stuermann states, is that Satan is "the evil counterpart to the perfect Son." "Jehovah's Witnesses," Interpretation 10 (July 1956):329.
a spirit, although having a spiritual or heavenly past and back-
ground." Since Jesus was not God but a god in his preexistence, and since there was no incarnation at all, "He was not a God-man on earth." According to Jehovah's Witnesses' thinking, the Christian concept of Incarnation is a doctrine of satanic origin.

Concerning the identity of Jesus Christ, Rutherford, the successor of Russell as leader of the Watchtower affirms: "In truth, when Jesus was on earth he was a perfect man, nothing more and nothing less." How did this perfect man come into existence? Such perfect humanity was possible through a process of transference of something from heaven to earth. "The heavenly Son of God . . . had his life transferred from heaven to the womb of the Jewish virgin, Mary of Bethlehem." In other words, transference defines the real event which finally culminated with the birth of Jesus.

Jehovah's Witnesses do not consistently employ the same term or terms to define that which was in fact transferred. It was God's Son's "life" (as just seen) or "life-force," or "life pattern," or "personality," or even "germ of life." However, it seems that


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the simple term life defines best what was transferred.¹

One suspects that any angel in heaven might have his life transferred to earth. That the life transferred was that of the Word, the only begotten Son, was only a matter of God's choice. "Who... was the son² whom God chose to be born as a perfect human creature? It was not the angel Gabriel.... It was... Michael."³ Note that this statement does not mean that Michael Himself was transferred, but his life. "His having his life-force transferred" to earth resulted "that he, Michael, disappeared from heaven."⁴

Such a phenomenon of transference was decisive for Jesus' divine sonship. Without it Jesus could not have been the Son of God on earth as the Word was the Son of God in heaven. "God continued to be his direct Father and he continued to be God's only-begotten Son."⁵ This phenomenon was also responsible for the human perfection of Jesus,⁶ but the operation of the Holy Spirit "formed, as it were, a 'protective wall' so that no imperfection or hurtful force could damage or blemish the developing embryo, from conception on."⁷

¹"Life" is employed in one of their most recent books; see You Can Live, p. 57.
²Note that son here is not capitalized.
⁴Ibid., pp. 137, 138. If the transference of Michael were admitted, some kind of incarnation would have occurred. But the clear affirmation is that Jesus is not the incarnation of the Word, that is, the incarnation of his preexistent state. "He was no incarnation of a heavenly person, no incarnation of the 'Word of God'" (Life Everlasting, p. 75).
⁵Ibid., pp. 75, 76. ⁶Let God Be, p. 39. ⁷Aid, p. 920.
This quotation not only indicates that Jehovah's Witnesses admit the absolute sinlessness of Jesus, but seems to imply that he was not subjected to the natural law of heredity, even physically. Although admitting that he resembled Mary in certain physical characteristics, the Watchtower affirms that he was "perfect in physical form."\(^1\) Things in Which It Is Impossible for God to Lie states:

Jesus was born a perfect human, in spite of the fact that his mother was an imperfect Jewess, Mary. . . . Thus this heavenly Son, who was God's Spokesman or "Word," was developed as a human child for nine months in the womb of his virgin mother, but not inheriting sin, imperfection and death from Mary's original earthly father, Adam.\(^2\)

Thus considered, "Jesus was the equal of the perfect man Adam. . . . He was a perfect man, even as Adam had been."\(^3\) He could be thus because "He was born without the aid of a human father, so that he would be perfect as Adam was."\(^4\)

By being such a perfect human creature Jesus was qualified to ransom humankind from sin. Such a ransom required the sacrifice of his perfect human life, and had as its sole objective to restore the human perfection lost by Adam's disobedience and sin.

It was the perfect man Adam that had sinned and so had lost for his offspring human perfection and its privileges. Jesus must likewise be humanly perfect, to correspond with the sinless Adam in Eden. In that way he could offer a ransom that exactly

\(^1\)Ibid.  \(^2\)Things, p. 231.  \(^3\)You Can Live, pp. 63, 62.  \(^4\)The Truth That Leads to Eternal Life (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1968), p. 51. This statement unavoidably leads to the conclusion that it is the male sex cell that transmits the sinful nature of Adam to every child who is conceived, since in the case of Jesus he had a human mother but was a perfect man.
corresponded in value with what the sinner Adam lost for his descendents. This requirement of divine justice did not allow for Jesus to be more than a perfect man.\footnote{Things, p. 232.}

So, for Jehovah's Witnesses the only begotten Son who in heaven was a mere angel, in his earthly life was not more than a perfect man, a second Adam.

\textbf{After His Resurrection}

Jehovah's Witnesses also deny the bodily resurrection of Christ: "The fleshly body is the body in which Jesus humbled himself, like a servant, and is not the body of his glorification, not the body in which he was resurrected."\footnote{Truth, p. 264.}

The reason presented for a non-physical or non-bodily resurrection is that the perfect human body of Jesus was sacrificed as a ransom or price paid for man's redemption, and therefore such a body could not be brought to life again.

God had prepared a fleshly body for him in coming to earth, and in order to have something acceptable to God to sacrifice he must sacrifice this perfect human body. \ldots To sacrifice something means to give it up, to suffer the loss of it, to renounce it for something else. Hence Jesus on being restored to life could not have that body back again in order to live in it. To do so would be taking back the sacrifice.\footnote{What Has Religion Done for Mankind? (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Trace Society, 1951), pp. 258, 259.}

Therefore Jesus was raised no more as a human being but as a spirit creature. "Jehovah God raised him from the dead, not as a human Son, but as a mighty immortal spirit Son. \ldots\footnote{Let God Be, p. 40.} "In his resurrection he was no more human. He was raised as a spirit creature. \ldots\footnote{Kingdom, p. 258.}"
The prophecy that the body of Jesus would not see corruption (Ps 16:10; Acts 2:25-28) is explained by saying that "Jehovah God disposed of that body in his own way,"¹ "as if it had been offered in sacrifice to him on a literal altar."² How God disposed of it Witnesses confess not to know;³ but they are prone to affirm, probably with the burnt offerings in mind, that God desintegrated the human body of Jesus.⁴ Rutherford, however, took the risk of surmising that "the Lord may have preserved it somewhere to exhibit to the people in the Millennial age."⁵ The post-resurrection appearances are due to the fact that Christ materialized different human bodies on the different occasions when he appeared to his disciples. Thus he became visible and was seen in the same way angels had been seen by humans.⁶

Since Jesus offered his human life to pay the ransom and thus could not have that life back, on what basis could he be raised as a spirit creature? Commenting on Luke 23:46, "Into thy hands I

¹Truth, p. 264; see also Kingdom, p. 259.
⁴Aid, p. 247. ⁵Harp of God, p. 173.
⁶"For forty days after that he materialized, as angels before him had done, to show himself alive to his disciples as witnesses" (Let God Be, p. 40). The phenomenon of appearing and disappearing is described in these terms: "Just as spirit angels had previously done, he was obliged to materialize a body of flesh in order to make himself visible to his earthly disciples from time to time. Each time he would dematerialize the fleshly body assumed and would disappear into the spirit realm" (Things, p. 332).

However, it is questionable that angels need to materialize fleshly bodies to become visible. They have the power to become visible while still being only spirit beings. As such, one of them could become visible to an ass while remaining invisible to its rider (Num 22:22-34). It is enough for the Lord to open man's eyes that he may see an angel (vs. 31). Cf. the experience of Elisha's servant (2 Kgs 6:11-17).
commend my spirit," Jehovah's Witnesses say: "He knew he was dying faithful, and hence was worthy to commend his power of life to the great Life-giver in hope of a resurrection." ¹ "Because Jesus was no sinner but was faithful till death, God could raise him up." ² Jesus was not raised because through his death he conquered the power of death as Scriptures declare (Heb 2:14; 13:20), ³ but because he deserved it. His resurrection is attributed to the Father only. ⁴

The resurrection of Jesus as a spirit creature means that he became what he had been before conception in Mary. "Christ Jesus had resumed his spiritual existence in heaven and was now a divine, immortal spirit, having been resurrected as such from the dead." ⁵ He became again Michael ⁶ and the Word. ⁷ As a spirit creature he ascended to heaven to be High Priest, ⁸ a higher position than he had before his earthly life. ⁹ In spite of all this, He remains inferior to the Father: "Even after his death and resurrection and ascension to heaven, Jesus was still not equal to his Father." ¹⁰

To summarize, Jesus, who on earth was a mere perfect man, after his resurrection stopped being man to become an angel again.

¹ Truth, p. 263.  ² What Has Religion Done? p. 258.
³ To Jehovah's Witnesses the death of Christ does not mean the bruising of the Serpent's head. The resurrected and glorified Christ will do this "in God's due time" (God's Eternal Purpose, p. 155). So the cross, or stake as they call it, is not an instrument of triumph but of shame and death. Certainly this is the reason why the cross is to be hated rather than appreciated (Truth That Leads, p. 143).
⁴ Things, p. 266.  ⁵ New World, p. 93.
⁶ God's Eternal Purpose, p. 155.  ⁷ Aid, p. 1669.
⁹ Let God Be, p. 40.  ¹⁰ You Can Live, pp. 39, 40.
Critique of Watchtower Christology

The reason why Jesus must be more than a simple god or a mere angel in order to be Savior is discussed in chapters 2 and 4. This section analyzes the Jehovah's Witnesses' theory of "transference" and their view of the resurrection.

Incarnation or Mere Transference of Life?

As noted above, Jehovah's Witnesses believe that the doctrine of Incarnation is of satanic origin. This position is related to their understanding of incarnation in terms of hybridism, materialization, or some kind of docetism. Rutherford thought of Jesus according to the Christian concept of incarnation as a "spirit being inhabiting a body of flesh," namely, a sort of spiritualistic transmigration. In other words, erroneous concepts of Incarnation are assumed and then rejected as non-biblical. But what is denied is not the orthodox Christian understanding of the incarnation.

Admittedly, the word "incarnation" is not a biblical term. It is a term coined by the Christian faith to give full expression to those two great realities about Jesus Christ that we can infer from the Gospels; namely, he is very God and he is very man, although he is one person. Jesus is eternal as God, but not eternal as God and man. Incarnation defines the event by which those two realities began to coexist in one person. He who was fully God in heaven was born on earth in such a way that "the result of this birth was

\[^{1}\text{Life Everlasting}, \text{p. 75.}\] \[^{2}\text{Truth}, \text{p. 245.}\] \[^{3}\text{Russell, 5:94, 95.}\] \[^{4}\text{Harp of God, p. 103.}\]
a unique Person, One who was perfect God and perfect man.¹

In examining the Watchtower theory of transference, one may ask: Was the transference of the life of Michael to the womb of Mary equivalent to the transference of Michael Himself? If so, it is impossible to deny some kind of incarnation as having taken place so that Michael might continue being Michael when he became a human being. If not, how can it be explained that an angel's life is transferred and not the angel himself? How do Jehovah's Witnesses face this example of dispersonalization and sequent repersonalization of life?² This phenomenon seems to be more like a spiritualistic transmigration than the Christian doctrine of the incarnation. Furthermore, if this is the case, there is no real continuity between Michael (or the heavenly Logos) and the human Jesus, and his pre-existence is a farce.

Another question is: Where precisely was the life of Michael transferred to? Generally the answer is to Mary's womb. However, two more specific, nevertheless conflicting, answers can be found in


²What about the spirit body of Michael in heaven? Since it was not transferred with his life and a body cannot survive without life, it is proper to ask if there can be in heaven something like a dead body. Russell, 5:90, says: "The incident of his birth as a human being . . . did not involve a death to the spirit nature preceding the birth as a babe, but merely a transference of his life from a higher or spirit nature to a lower or human nature." We have here two contradictory statements: "spirit nature did not die" and "there was merely a transference of his life." How and where did the spirit nature remain alive? The contradiction is actual unless one admits that the spirit nature was transferred along with the life. This would result in two natures abiding in Jesus and would mean that incarnation did, in fact, take place. However, Jehovah's Witnesses do not accept the transference of the spirit nature (see Life Everlasting, p. 75, and What Has Religion Done? p. 231).
Watchtower literature. One of them is: "The life of the Son of God was transferred from his glorious position with God his Father in heaven to the embryo of a human." According to Webster, an embryo is "The human organism in the first three months after conception." In other words, the transference of Michael's life occurred any time within the three months after the conception.

In order to avoid the difficulty of explaining how the embryo could stay alive during the time between the moment of conception and that in which the transference of life occurred, let us assume that such a transference occurred at the exact moment of the conception. However, this not only strengthens the spiritualistic transmigration flavor of the transference theory but brings up another more difficult problem. We noticed that Jehovah's Witnesses affirm that Jesus was solely a perfect man, nothing more and nothing less and that this process of transference provided for this fact. Another quotation reinforces such an assertion: "By having his perfect, sinless life transferred from heaven to the womb of a Jewish virgin, Jesus was born a perfect human and grew up to be a perfect man, absolutely sinless, guileless, undefiled." We can hardly understand how a person endowed with a heavenly life could be a human being. In fact, Jehovah's Witnesses become victims of the very error they ascribe to the Christian teaching. As Maurice Burrell has observed,

\[\text{\textsuperscript{1}}\text{Let God Be, p. 36; see also Truth, p. 245.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{2}}\text{Webster's Dictionary of the English Language, encyclopedic ed. (Chicago: J. G. Ferguson Publishing Company, 1979), 1:592.}\]

\[\text{\textsuperscript{3}}\text{Let God Be, p. 39.}\]
If the "life," "germ of life," or "life-force" of the pre-existent heavenly Logos became the source of the sinless life of the earthly Jesus, surely Jesus becomes more than a human being. Mary supplied His human body, but God supplied the supernatural life of the Logos to vitalize that body. Jesus becomes, it would seem, a human body in which a divine spirit lives, which is precisely the point Rutherford argues against orthodox Christians.¹

This also sounds like a form of Apollinarianism² and places Jehovah's Witnesses, who explicitly deny Jesus as very God, in the unconscious position of denying him as very man.

The second specific answer regarding where life was transferred to appears in the following:

The Almighty God, the heavenly Father, by means of his holy spirit transferred the life-force of his chosen heavenly son from the invisible spirit realm to the egg cell in Mary's body and fertilized it. In this way Mary became pregnant.³

According to this statement, the life of Michael was the substitute for the male sex cell and caused the fertilization in Mary. Such a phenomenon was crucial for the human perfection of Jesus and his divine sonship on earth:

It would appear that the perfect male life force (causing the conception) canceled out any imperfection existent in Mary's ovum, thereby producing a genetic pattern (and embryonic development) that was perfect from its start. . . . Only in this way could the child eventually born have retained identity as the same person who had resided in heaven as the Word.⁴

The last statement of this citation is astonishing. How could the child Jesus be the same person of the heavenly Logos, when

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¹Burrel, p. 136.
²From Apollinarius, bishop of Laodicea in the fourth Century who denied Christ's full humanity. For him the heavenly λόγος took the place of the human spirit in Jesus.
³God's Eternal Purpose, p. 137; see also Kingdom, p. 49, and Aid, p. 920.
⁴Aid, p. 920.
this person was transformed in a male sex cell to produce conception in Mary, from which he, Jesus, was born? It would be more logical and natural to consider Jesus the son of that heavenly person, and not that person himself. Furthermore, if what Jehovah's Witnesses affirm is true, then it is impossible to escape from the conclusion that Jesus is in fact the result of hybridism, i.e., the result of a human ovum fertilized by a non-human "male life force," to use their own terms, and that he is not a human being at all.

Jehovah's Witnesses say that they cannot accept the doctrine of incarnation because it "dishonors God and destroys the value of the great ransom sacrifice,"¹ for if Jesus were the fruit of any incarnation he could not be a perfect man to be sacrificed for sinners.² But, as noted, it is the transference process that hinders the true humanity of Jesus and prevents him from being Savior. Therefore it is this philosophical-biological speculation that is anti-biblical, not the incarnation.

The biblical testimony is that "God sent forth His Son" (Gal 4:4), not the "life" or the "pattern" or the "personality" of his Son, but the very Son. The Holy Spirit came upon Mary overshadowing her and making her pregnant (Luke 1:31-34). In this way a body was prepared that the Son might assume humanity. When the miraculous conception was effected, "He came into the world" and said: "Lo, I have come to do thy will, 0 God" (Heb 10:5). So a

¹Reconciliation, p. 125.

²"The incarnation of Jesus is scripturally erroneous. Indeed, if he had been merely an incarnated being, he could never have redeemed mankind" (Harp of God, p. 102).
second miracle took place—God adopted or assumed human nature and the result was Jesus Christ, truly God and truly man, our Savior. 

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

Therefore only incarnation makes possible the coming of the one who is able to save man. As we saw, only somebody holding both deity and humanity can solve the problem of sin.

Is Non-bodily Resurrection in Fact Resurrection?

We have noticed that Jehovah's Witnesses also reject the bodily resurrection of Jesus. Because of his sacrifice on the cross his body could not be raised to life for it had been given as a ransom for sin. God resurrected Jesus as a spirit person because of his faithfulness. He again became Michael the archangel; his human body simply disappeared.

This position also has its problems. For example, since Christ had had in himself the life of Michael, what life could be sacrificed at Calvary but Michael's life? If this life could not be brought back because it was given as a ransom, how did Christ become Michael right after his resurrection? There remains no alternative except to admit that there was no resurrection at

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1 Shedd, 2:268, 269, explains the implication of incarnation, as follows: "The distinctive characteristic of the incarnation is the union of two different natures, a divine and a human, so as to constitute a single person. . . . It is the divine nature, and not the human, which is the base of Christ's person. The second trinitarian person is the root and stock into which the human nature is grafted. . . . The human nature which he assumed to himself acquired personality by its union with him."

all, but the re-creation of Michael.¹

However, it is hard to understand why Jehovah's Witnesses do not accept the bodily resurrection of Jesus when they themselves affirm that by raising him from the dead God "healed the wound inflicted by the Serpent upon" his heel.² If the inflicting of the wound is to be understood in terms of Jesus' death on the cross, where his body was sacrificed, why should not this same body be resurrected, since the wound was healed? If his body remained dead, would not this fact be evidence that the wound was not really healed?

Indeed, resurrection only makes sense when vivification of the body is meant. When the Bible says that Jesus was "put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit" (1 Pet 3:18),³ it does not reject the bodily resurrection, but simply contrasts flesh and spirit⁴ in order to point out two different spheres of existence,⁵

¹Therefore there is no real continuity between Jesus and the now reinstalled Michael. Inasmuch as there was also no real continuity between the preexistent Michael and the earthly Jesus, as we previously saw, Anthony A. Hoekema wisely concludes that "Really, Jehovah's Witnesses have three Christs, none of whom is equal to Jehovah and none of whom is the Christ of the Scriptures." (The Four Major Cults (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1965), p. 276. But one of the outstanding Christological points of the primitive kerygma is that the glorified Christ is the same person who lived on earth and died on the cross. See C. F. D. Moule, "The Christology of Acts," Studies in Luke-Acts, ed. Leander E. Keck and J. Louis Martin (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), pp. 165, 166.

²Kingdom, p. 257; see also What Has Religion Done? p. 258.

³1 Pet 3:18 is a key-passage for Jehovah's Witnesses' doctrinal structure. It appears in practically every book published by them.

⁴The antithesis between flesh and spirit is present throughout the NT. Among the several passages mentioning it, we cite Mark 14:38; John 3:6; Rom 1:4; 8:4-6; 1 Cor 5:5; Gal 3:3; 1 Tim 3:16.

⁵"His death took place in the sphere of 'the flesh', the earthly, temporal existence; His resurrection took place in the sphere..."
that of this world and that of the world above, or in eschatological terms, the life of this age and the life of the age to come, the New Age.

The expression "put to death in the flesh" implies that Jesus lived an earthly life, i.e., after the manner of a mortal human being, and that therefore he was under the decree of death like any man. "The Word became flesh" (John 1:14) in order to be able to die as humans die. The expression "made alive in the spirit" implies that he was raised not to continue the same kind of life he had lived before (as the resurrected Lazarus did), a life characterized by limitations and frailty, but to live an empowered life, the life of the New Age in its fullness and completeness.¹

But, of course, this fact is not incompatible with a bodily resurrection. As C. E. B. Cranfield explains, "Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the spirit" is not . . . a contradiction of the biblical doctrine of the resurrection of the body; rather it means that, while the body of Christ that was crucified was subject to the frailty and limitations of an ordinary human body, the body that was of 'the spirit', the eternal, the undestructible, the heavenly." Francis W. Beare, The First Epistle of Peter (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1947), p. 143. Another scholar, D. Kelly, understands flesh here as indicative of his "human sphere of existence, considered as a man among men" and spirit as meaning "Christ in His heavenly spiritual sphere of existence considered as divine spirit" without the exclusion of his human nature. A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude (New York: Harper and Row, Pub., 1969), p. 151. See also W. J. Dalton, Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965), p. 127-31.

¹ See 2 Cor 13:4 where Paul employs the antithesis "weakness/power" instead of "flesh/spirit" to make reference to the death and resurrection of Jesus.
raised up, though it bore the scars of His death, is no longer subject to such limitations . . . but is a spiritual body.¹

The clear testimony of the NT is that Jesus' body did not remain in the grave, neither was it taken away by God (a different version of the lie of the Jews in Matt 28:11-15), nor did it disintegrate. When the same Peter, in his Pentecostal sermon, referred to the prophecy of Ps 16 that the Messiah's flesh would not see corruption, he made of this reference a solid argument in behalf of Jesus' bodily resurrection (Acts 2:25-32). Likewise when the women, provided with spices and ointments, went to the supulchre to anoint the body of Jesus, they were perplexed because "they did not find the body" (Luke 24:3). Instead of saying, "The body is not here because God took it to another place," the angel said, "He is not here, for he has risen" (Matt 28:6). "See the place where they laid him" (Mark 16:6). Jesus himself had foreseen his bodily resurrection when he cleansed the temple: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise up . . . . He spoke of the temple of His body" (John 2:19, 21). How can such clear affirmations be denied? Furthermore there are the post-resurrection appearances to the disciples. "See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit has not flesh and bones as you see that I have" (Luke 24:39, 40). If such appearances were mere materialization, then Christ was the master of delusion.²


²Ted Dencher, an ex-Jehovah's Witness, remarks: "The Bible shows that Jesus appeared to Thomas in the body that was crucified (John 20). If it was not the same body then it was another body, and if it was another body then Thomas did not see what he thought he was seeing, and hence he was deceived by Jesus. If that was not
The bodily resurrection of Jesus does not nullify the efficacy of his sacrifice, as Jehovah's Witnesses think. On the contrary, it confirms it. As has been pointed out, the resurrection is the overwhelming demonstration of His triumph over death. His faithfulness to God is not the final cause of his resurrection, nor must we understand his sacrifice in terms of a mere ransom. It was a ransom, it is true, but more than this is involved. Jesus was raised because through his sacrifice the power of death was broken (Heb 2:14). That is why he says, "I am the first and the last, and the living one; I died and behold I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades" (Rev 1:18). Some scholars see in Heb 13:20 an affirmation that Jesus was raised by virtue of his own sacrifice. Philips E. Hughes, for instance, affirms:

Had he not been brought again from the dead he could be neither Savior, nor Lord. His dying would have been just one more in long sequence of sacrifices, which cannot take away sins (Heb. 10:11f.). Death would have had the final word. But the resurrection manifested his glory as the prince of life and conqueror of death....

the very body that had been crucified, then even if Thomas had put his hands upon the wounds it would not have proven anything. He could have replied: 'This isn't the body of Jesus Christ! This is just a body invented for the moment, and it is about to disappear into thin air and become as nonexistent as it was before! If You are really Jesus, I want to see You as You were before You were 'resurrected'--I want to see the body You had then; not this body You've just materialized and which never existed before!'" "The Watchtower Versus the Bible," The Alliance Witness, Aug. 31, 1966, p. 31.

This is precisely the Watchtower concept of Christ's sacrifice—one of the same level of the OT sacrifices. They affirm, therefore, that Jesus' body could not be raised, since it should be fully sacrificed. See God's Eternal Purpose, pp. 154, 155.

Therefore, 1 Pet 3:18 can never be used to support the idea of a non-bodily resurrection. Neither does it indicate that Jesus was no longer a human being after his resurrection. ¹ Paul states explicitly that the glorified Christ in heaven is man (1 Tim 2:5). Jesus was raised not as a spirit, but "in spirit" for an incorruptible, immortal life going before his followers to heaven (John 14:1-3). As resurrected, he is the first fruits, the first-born from the dead, the second Adam, the Head of a new humanity (1 Cor 15:20-23; Col 1:18; Rev 1:5). We also will be raised with a "spiritual body" (1 Cor 15:43). Now we long for "the redemption of our bodies" (Rom 8:23) on that day when Jesus will come to give life to our "mortal bodies" (vs. 11) which will be "changed in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Cor 15:52). Then he "will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body" (Phil 3:21), and "we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (1 John 3:2).

Such is the hope that his resurrection gives. Jehovah's Witnesses are unconscious of how devastating the teaching of the non-bodily resurrection of Jesus is for the Christian faith. Christianity stands or falls with the resurrection. Destroy the belief in the resurrection of Jesus' body and Christianity will disappear with it. Our hope would be restricted to this life only and we would be "of all men most to be pitied" (1 Cor 15:19).

¹ Cf. 1 Pet 4:6 where "in spirit" is clearly related to human beings.

Watchtower Soteriology

"Take steps quickly to work for survival and for eternal life in God's new order."¹ Fifteen years ago, the magazine Awake gave its readers this warning. That eternal life is obtained through human effort and merit is clearly implied in the use of the verb "to work" in this statement. The reader was also urged to "take steps" for salvation. What are those steps?

One of the most popular books by Jehovah's Witnesses, From Paradise Lost to Paradise Regained, concludes with a chapter entitled, "What You Must Do Now to Regain Paradise"² in which the author discusses those steps. There are, he says, four things an individual must do to be saved: (1) he must study the Bible because it tells what God wants done;³ (2) he must meet with the people who make up the New World society;⁴ (3) he must change his living from the former way to God's way⁵--this includes repentance, acceptance of Christ's ransom, dedication of life to Jehovah, and baptism; and (4) he must be a Jehovah's Witness telling about his kingdom,⁶ for "only the preachers of God's Kingdom can expect to be protected during the end of this world and to live through Armageddon into the new world."⁷

The emphasis placed upon human performance for one's

²Paradise, pp. 242-50.
³Ibid., p. 242.
⁴Ibid., p. 244.
⁵Ibid., p. 246.
⁶Ibid., p. 248.
⁷Ibid., p. 249.
attainment of eternal life is striking. In this scheme there is little or no room for God's activity; even the transformation of life is human work. The acceptance of Jesus' sacrifice, referred to here in terms of a ransom, is only one item of salvation among others.

Due to the fact that Calvary constitutes the very essence of the Gospel, which is the power of God for salvation (Rom 1:16), it is necessary to discuss in detail what Jehovah's Witnesses think of Jesus' death when they define it as a ransom. In doing so, the reason why it does not occupy a more prominent position in Watchtower Soteriology emerges.

The Ransom and the Quantitative Concept of Sin

Ransom is understood to be a price paid for deliverance from the sin and death human beings inherited from Adam.

Mankind's need for a ransom came about through the rebellion in Eden. Adam sold himself to do evil... He thereby sold himself and his descendents into slavery to sin and death, the price that God's justice required. Having possessed human perfection, Adam lost this valuable possession for himself and all his offspring.¹

The above quotation touches on two major points: (1) All that the ransomer as such has to be is a perfect human being like Adam before the fall. This is confirmed in the following: "He would have to correspond to the perfect Adam and possess human perfection, if he were to pay the price of redemption that would release Adam's offspring from the debt, disability and enslavement into which their first father Adam had sold them."² (2) All the benefit resulting

¹Aid, p. 1373. ²Ibid.
from the ransom is the restoration on earth of the original perfect human life. Nothing more, nothing less than the perfect life of Adam lost through sin is repurchased by the death of Christ. "That which is redeemed or bought back is what was lost, namely, perfect human life, with its rights and earthly prospects."\(^1\) According to this understanding, Jehovah's Witnesses render the Greek \(\alpha\nu\tau\zeta\lambda\nu\tau\rho\omicron\) in 1 Tim 2:6 as "a corresponding ransom."

These two points indicate that Jehovah's Witnesses sustain a quantitative concept of sin and not a qualitative one. Notice the reasoning of Russell:

One unforfeited life could redeem one forfeited life, but no more. . . . If we should suppose the total number of human beings since Adam to be one hundred billions, and that only one half of these had sinned, it would require all of the fifty billions of obedient, perfect men to die in order to give a ransom [a corresponding price] for all the fifty billions of transgressors.\(^2\)

In the case of Christ, one person only was sacrificed because he paid the penalty of the sin of one person only, Adam. "As one man had sinned, and all in him had shared his curse, his penalty, so Jesus, having paid the penalty of that one sinner, bought not only Adam, but all of his posterity—all men—who by heredity shared his weaknesses and sins and the penalty of these—death."\(^3\)

The Ransom, a Guarantee for a New Opportunity

Although Jehovah's Witnesses presently disagree with Russell's assertion that Christ ransomed all of Adam's posterity, "all men," the principle involved in Russell's reasoning, that of a

\(^1\)Let God Be, p. 114. \(^2\)Russell, 1:133. \(^3\)Ibid., p. 129.
"corresponding ransom," has remained. Christ laid down his life as an atonement for Adam's sin. His posterity was involved in the ransom not so much because they have committed their own sins and God in his mercy has provided a Savior, but because they have, as Adam's offspring, shared in the condemnation of his sin. The point is that the ransom provides for Adam's descendants the opportunity that Adam had had (and lost) and which they did not have— to be faithful to God and to live forever. Precisely because of this fact, Adam is not included in the ransom (since he already had his own chance), but only his "offspring, who, without any choice in the matter, suffered the effect of his wrong."¹ In other words, Christ did not die to assure eternal life to man, but to give him an opportunity to be faithful and then to receive eternal life. "The 'ransom for all' given by 'the man Christ Jesus' does not give or guarantee everlasting life or blessing to any man; but it does guarantee to every man another opportunity or trial for life everlasting."²

The experience of the penitent thief is a good illustration of this principle. Jesus promised to him that he would be in paradise (Luke 23:43). This was not a promise of eternal life at all, but a promise of an opportunity to gain eternal life. Paradise here is the earth in the millenial kingdom of Jesus Christ. Some time during the millenium this man will be raised that he may learn the will of Jehovah and take a decision for or against it. Thousands of millions of other human beings will have the same experience.

¹Truth That Leads, p. 51. ²Russell, 1:150.
It is true that this man did bad things. He was "unrighteous." Also, he was ignorant of God's will. But would he have been a criminal if he had known about God's purposes? To find out, Jesus will resurrect this unrighteous man, as well as thousands of millions of others who died in ignorance. ... They will be taught God's will, and they will have the opportunity to prove that they really do love God by doing his will. 

Therefore, Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe that the penitent thief, through faith in Jesus and by virtue of his sacrifice, received forgiveness for his sins and assurance of eternal life. Jesus only declared that the thief was worthy of the ransom he was paying at that moment, and assured him an opportunity of showing himself worthy of eternal life.

The Ransom and Human Merit

Why was the same opportunity not assured to the other thief? The obvious answer is that the benefit of the ransom is not applied to every man. Only "the worthy ones of Adam's children" are bought back through the ransom. In a special way "the value of the perfect life of Jesus was now available for use on behalf of faithful men needing to be ransomed thereby." Thus the importance of the human merit for the enjoyment of the benefit of the ransom is positively stated.

The penitent thief, for example, is, in fact, considered "unrighteous," a doer of "bad things." But he also had good qualities; he "had shown a notable quality and commendable heart

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1 You Can Live Forever, p. 171.
2 Paradise, p. 143. 3 Let God Be, p. 116.
4 But he had the attenuating circumstance of being an "ignorant of God's will" (You Can Live Forever, p. 171).
attitude in not going along with the crowd but rather, speaking out in Jesus' behalf and expressing belief in his coming kingship";¹
"He showed that his heart was not altogether bad toward God";² and even to have been an honest man.³

Therefore it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that human merit is taken into account for the efficacy of the ransom. The New World gives the impression that God provided the ransom motivated by the good disposition of some people towards righteousness:

Jehovah also foretold that other righteous creatures would be associated with his only begotten Son in The Theocracy, the "new heavens." God would love those creatures who showed such devotion to righteousness as to qualify for that heavenly privilege. . . . In order to provide the way for such creatures to be changed from human to spirit, Jehovah God gave his beloved Son to be the ransom sacrifice.⁴

The Purpose of the Ransom.
God's Vindication Rather Than Man's Salvation

Righteousness is defined here as the vindication of Jehovah's name and his universal domination.⁵ It is explicitly stated that "It was his [God's] love of the world of righteousness, and not mere mortal human creatures, that moved God."⁶ God provided the ransom in the interest of the vindication of his name and rulership,⁷

¹Aid, p. 1269. ²Paradise, p. 229. ³Kingdom, p. 252. How could a thief be an honest man?
⁴New World, p. 119. If this is true, the plan of redemption is not the action of God to bring about the human reaction of faith, but the favorable divine reaction towards a positive human action. But the process of human action and divine reaction lies at the root of all false religion, since according to the Gospel it is God who takes the initiative for human salvation, not man.
⁵Ibid., p. 117. ⁶Ibid.
which were challenged by Satan. "In behalf of the great act of righteousness, the vindication of Jehovah's name, the Lord God gave or appointed his beloved Son to be the head One of the Theocracy."¹

This "Theocracy" or "New World" is composed by the "new heavens" and the "new earth." The first is "Jesus Christ the King and his 144,000 glorified Kingdom associates" in heaven, and the second is "those faithful men of old, whom the King makes 'princes in all the earth'."² Of course both "new heavens" and "new earth" are constituted by individuals who acknowledge the sovereignty of Jehovah and subject themselves to his rulership. Through them Jehovah's name and domination are finally vindicated. For this reason they are the special object of God's love. Jesus Christ who most clung to righteousness (through whom, therefore, Jehovah's name is most vindicated), who "was never on the side of sin and unrighteousness," is he whom "Jehovah God loves most dearly of all righteous creatures."³ The inevitable conclusion is that the love of God for one individual is proportional to the measure of his devotion to righteousness through which God vindicates his name. So, foretelling that a certain number of human beings would subject themselves to the sovereignty of Jehovah and knowing that such subjection was crucial for the vindication of his name, God provided the ransom through Jesus Christ. In reality God did not love this old world of poor and lost sinners to the point of giving them his Son to be their Savior. He loved the vindication of his own

¹Ibid., p. 119. ²Ibid. ³Ibid.
name and rulership, and by extension those by whom this vindication would be effected. That is why the word new is introduced in other biblical passages implying the love of God for sinners. Notice:

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the [new] world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim 1:15). . . . "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the [new] world" (John 1:29). . . . "That was the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the [new] world" (John 1:9). . . . I came not to judge the [new] world, but to save the [new] world" (John 12:47).

Thus, God's love is restricted only to certain individuals.

A quotation from Hope in a Righteous World confirms the belief that Jesus was not sacrificed on behalf of every man.

The benefits of the ransom sacrifice are not for the rebellious wicked, nor did Christ Jesus die for such. . . . Christ Jesus tasted death and gave himself a ransom only for all such as believe God and accept his provision for redemption through his beloved Son, and who then devote themselves to God to do his will and who then obey him.  

Human Relationship to the Ransom
Not the Decisive Factor

However, the emphasis is not placed on believing in Jesus to be saved but on believing in God's government. "No one can have everlasting life except he believes in The Theocracy as the only hope and then devotes himself to and advocates that Righteous Government." This suits what the ransom has to offer to man: an opportunity to be faithful. After all, the final test, through which a person demonstrates worthiness of eternal life, has to do with God's government.

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1Ibid., pp. 122, 123.
3New World, p. 120.
4See below, pp. 97-99.
A striking difference between wicked people and unrighteous people is established by Jehovah's Witnesses. The wicked are those who willingly persist in sinning and reject the ransom, in spite of God's revelation of his will and provision. Through such an attitude they place themselves beyond the possibility of receiving the benefit of Jesus' ransom. "Those willfully wicked and hard-hearted toward Jehovah's provision do not have ransom merit and life forced upon them."\(^1\) They die with no prospect of resurrection. "Those who die wicked beyond reform or correction and beyond redemption by Christ's blood will not be brought out of the grave to judgment in the new world."\(^2\) Death represents their total annihilation. The unrighteous are those who practice evil things but do it in ignorance of God's will. Such enjoy the benefit of the ransom. They will be raised, as seen in the case of the penitent thief, and will have an opportunity to evidence their faithfulness.

A third group must be mentioned: the righteous people, those who have believed in the ransom and have dedicated their lives to Jehovah for the fulfillment of his will. They also die but with the hope of resurrection.

However, the decisive factor in determining to which group one belongs is his relationship not to the ransom but to Jehovah's government. Cain, for example, knew nothing about the ransom. The promise of Gen 3:15 had to do first of all with Jehovah's "supremacy over all creatures"\(^3\) rather than with the death of the

\(^1\) Let God Be, p. 120. \(^2\) Ibid., p. 289. \(^3\) Truth, p. 98.
future Deliverer. So Cain had to choose whether he would serve Jehovah God or Satan. He chose to serve the latter. He became wicked; for him the benefit of the ransom was not available. Abel chose to serve Jehovah and became his first human witness. His shed blood "stood as a testimony of integrity toward God and for a vindication of his name." Therefore, God has made provision for Abel in the ransom and he will be in the paradise, as a prince along with all the other faithful ones who were also "Jehovah's Witnesses." So, the efficacy of the ransom for an individual depends upon the individual's response to God's rulership.

After the death of Jesus, the acceptance by faith of the ransom provided by God is naturally an essential element of one's act of subjection to Jehovah's government, since the ransom is a provision God makes in the exercise of his sovereignty. This idea is stated as follows:

In order for men to be saved from death due to being stung by sin they must inform themselves of God's mercy through Christ Jesus and then have faith in the provision He has made. This faith means to rely on such provision confidently, to give God all credit for it, and then to demonstrate this conviction by devoting oneself to God, and by informing others about the ransom.

Yet, as has already been noted, acceptance of the ransom is only one item within the process of subjection to God's rulership.

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1 What Has Religion Done?, p. 66.
3 Truth, p. 121. 4 Ibid.
5 What Has Religion Done?, p. 339. 6 Let God Be, p. 120.
In fact, when a man accepts the ransom, he appears "righteous in God's eyes" and is reconciled to God. But this is not enough. There are other things man needs to do "to continue righteous in God's sight," such as being baptized and becoming a devoted Jehovah's Witness by announcing his Kingdom to others.

This does not yet mean that the individual has achieved salvation. By acting in this way the individual is able, at best, to survive Armageddon, the "day of vengeance on the part of our God." Then he will live on earth during the millenial Kingdom of Jesus Christ, preparing himself for the final test at the end, when, if approved, he receives eternal life. It is evident, therefore, that for Jehovah's Witnesses the assurance of salvation is only possible after the millennium.

The Final Achievement of Salvation

Regarding final salvation, the Witnesses state that "the course of an individual determines whether he will ultimately receive the benefit from the ransom sacrifice of Jesus Christ." The term "ultimately" clearly implies that the real benefit of the ransom lies somewhere in the future. We have noted that the acceptance of the ransom does not mean possession of eternal life either in the present or in the future. Neither does the non-acceptance of the ransom necessarily mean exclusion from such an opportunity. As noted, the unrighteous have this opportunity

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1 Things, p. 399.  2 Ibid., p. 401.  3 Ibid.  4 Ibid., pp. 403-405.  5 Ibid., p. 406.  6 Let God Be, p. 120.
because, although they have not accepted the ransom, they are ignorant of God's will.

Those who are worthy of the ransom enjoy their opportunity during the millennium when the Devil and his demons are imprisoned. Jehovah's Witnesses, the righteous ones, are the only ones to survive Armageddon¹ just before the Millennium begins. Those Jehovah's Witnesses who died before Armageddon (including those who lived in OT times) are resurrected before the unrighteous² because they, along with those who did not die, have to get the earth ready to receive the unrighteous about to be raised. One of their tasks is to purify the earth from the bones of those who died during the battle of Armageddon and from their weapons of war.³ Then the earth acquires paradisiac conditions and the unrighteous are raised. They do not come back from death with perfect human nature. "The 'law of sin and of death' will not have been abolished from them."⁴ Since those individuals died in ignorance of God purposes,


²Paradise, pp. 230, 231. Jehovah's Witnesses who will be prince-rulers on earth after Armageddon will be raised before those who will not be (What Has Religion Done?, p. 339), but all the Witnesses will be raised before the unrighteous.

³Truth, p. 361.

⁴Life Everlasting, p. 397. On p. 396, this book affirms: "No change in physical growth, mental growth, moral makeup or personal disposition will have been produced in them by the time that they are resurrected . . . They will be the same personalities, the same people." This means in fact that the penitent thief will be raised still as a thief, with possible tendencies to robbery, and the Sodomites and Gomorrites who will also be raised (You Can Live, p. 179) will possess the same bad propensities they had before; this surely will put at risk the welfare in paradise. If this is true, the following statement in Let God Be (p. 267) is an inconsistency:
they have to learn "what he expects of men."\(^1\) A vast "educational work in behalf of them will begin and go on throughout the millennium."\(^2\)

That great crowd of resurrected people will be taught the will of God by Jehovah's Witnesses of all the ages. They learn about the truth, the laws of Jehovah.\(^3\) The Scriptures are not enough as a textbook for the ministration of such teaching. Scrolls are added to "our present Bible. They are inspired writings or books that contain Jehovah's laws and instructions."\(^4\) Those who refuse to subject to God's government are annihilated sooner or later before "the millennium is finished."\(^5\) Those who accept Jehovah's teaching and obey His laws grow in physical perfection and improvement of character.\(^6\) When the end of the millennium comes, all of them, teachers and pupils, will have obtained perfect human nature like that of Adam before the fall.\(^7\) This process of perfectionism is possible through human effort with the help of the King Jesus and the 144,000 in heaven.\(^8\)

The fact that those who reject Jehovah's laws are executed during the millennium indicates that a work of judgment is going on

"Gone will be the need for . . . local police force, to subdue crime and maintain order. Lawlessness and vice . . . will be things of the old-world past."

during this time. The judgment is performed in heaven by Jesus Christ and the 144,000 upon the inhabitants of the earth. The heavenly judges do not judge them according to the life they lived before Armageddon, but according to their actions during the millennium. The reason for this procedure is as follows:

There will be no need to go over the record of their past life in the flesh, because the judges in heaven will know that people's past life of sin and imperfection already condemn them. But Christ died as a ransom sacrifice to relieve mankind of sin and imperfection and the penalty thereof.

These people are judged according to their reaction to God's laws set down in the scrolls:

The "scrolls" that the apostle John saw opened are not the record of the past earthly life of the people standing before the judgment throne, but are the law books of Jehovah. That is, they are the publications setting forth his will for all people on earth during Christ's millennial reign. After what is written in these law "scrolls" has been published and made known, the people will be judged by what laws and instructions are found written in those scrolls "according to their deeds" not their deeds committed in this life of before the scrolls were published, but their deeds afterward as long as they are in judgment.

Not only are the unrighteous involved in this judgment, which takes the whole millennium, but all of the inhabitants of the earth. Therefore the Jehovah's Witnesses of all the ages are also judged. So, the millennium represents one thousand years of tests for them. Those who stubbornly refuse to learn and practice Jehovah's laws, even if they have been Jehovah's Witnesses, are executed.

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1Babylon, p. 644; Things, p. 367.

2Ibid., p. 372. This quotation implies that "faith" is not necessary for the enjoyment of the benefit of the ransom. It is automatically applied to the sinner, except he is a member of the wicked group. We must not overlook the real benefit of the ransom: not eternal life but an opportunity to show oneself faithful.

3Babylon, p. 646.

4Let God Be, p. 288.
Thus, they have been raised to the resurrection of judgment. But those who keep themselves faithfully and growing in human perfection through good deeds are preserved for the prospect of everlasting life. They have been raised to a resurrection of life.¹

Yet, one thousand years of tests are not sufficient. At the end of the millennium, the final and "thorough test for all time" takes place.² By this time those who were preserved through their obedience have achieved perfect human nature like Adam before the fall. "In every respect they will be equal to the first perfect humans in Eden."³ Then they have the same opportunity that Adam had and missed: to show faithfulness to Jehovah. "They will stand without benefit of an intermediary before the One seated on the 'great white throne', hence in their own responsibility,"⁴ without the heavenly help of Jesus Christ and the 144,000, which they enjoyed during the millennium in their process of growth.

This final test is possible since Satan is released from his prison. He tempts every one to rebel against Jehovah's rulership, as he tempted Adam at the beginning. Jesus ransomed them mainly for this opportunity of being finally and definitively tested, an opportunity that they did not personally have in Eden.

¹Things, p. 373; You Can Live, p. 180. This reasoning is based on the words of Jesus in John 5:28, 29: "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come forth, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment." The point here is that the good and evil deeds referred to in this text are those practiced in the millennial life and not in the present life.
²Life Everlasting, p. 398. ³Truth That Leads, p. 112.
⁴Babylon, p. 646.
This time . . . they will not be unborn in Adam's loins and subject to his course. Each one will be there because of the ransom sacrifice of the "Everlasting Father," Jesus Christ. Each will be on his own destiny by his individual choice of action.¹

So the great objective of the ransom, to give an opportunity to Adam's descendants to show what they would do if they were in the place of Adam, is accomplished. The question is whether they will "now go the way of Adam and Eve or stay loyal to God and his Christ."² Satan, we are told, will be successful in turning at least "some people away from serving Jehovah."³ These are summarily executed.⁴ They die with no hope of another opportunity because "Christ Jesus now immortal and no longer human cannot die a second time" for them.⁵ They are annihilated together with Satan and his demons in the second death. Those who faithfully pass the final test are then justified, or declared righteous by Jehovah on the basis of their own merit. They have their names written in the "scroll of life" and are authorized to enjoy "perfect human life forever in the Paradise earth."⁶

From then on the earth will be an absolutely perfect planet and its inhabitants fully righteous and immaculate. However, even then they do not yet have total and absolute assurance of salvation.

¹What Has Religion Done?, p. 341.  ²Ibid.
³You Can Live, p. 183; Things, p. 374. Jehovah's Witnesses understand the expression "like the sand of the sea" of Rev 20:8 as indicative not of a great quantity, as the expression, in fact, suggests, but of an undetermined number.
⁴Life Everlasting, pp. 399, 400.
⁵What Has Religion Done?, p. 341.
⁶Life Everlasting, p. 400; Babylon, p. 646.
Anyone might become a new rebel, incur the wrath of Jehovah, and be annihilated.¹

Heaven Is for a Few Privileged

According to the understanding of Jehovah's Witnesses, the "144,000 . . . are the only ones whom Jehovah God takes to heaven with his Son. All others who gain life in his new world will live in paradise restored here on earth."² "Rather than all good people going to heaven, the Bible reveals that only 144,000 tried and faithful persons will be taken there to rule with Christ."³

For these, the tasting of physical death is a "prerequisite"⁴ to reach heaven:

The 144,000 are persons who die on earth as human and are resurrected to heavenly life as spirit creature, as Jesus was . . . . When compared with the thousands of millions of persons who live on earth they are, indeed, a "little flock."⁵

This quotation clearly presents two distinct groups of saved: the 144,000, or "little flock"⁶ who live in heaven with Jesus, and the "thousands of millions," known as the "great crowd"


²Paradise, p. 153.

³You Can Live Forever, p. 124; see also Let God Be, pp. 136, 137.

⁴Aid, p. 735.

⁵Truth That Leads, p. 77. Therefore none of 144,000 goes to heaven as a human being. They die and are raised as "spirit creatures" after the pattern of Jesus' resurrection.

⁶For other designations of the 144,000, see Gruss, Apostles, p. 91.
or the "other sheep,"¹ who live on earth as already described.

Due to the nature of their reward, only the 144,000 are seen by Jehovah's Witnesses² to be justified by faith;³ therefore, only they must experience the new birth, the dying and being raised with Christ, symbolized by baptism.⁴ As a result, only they are baptized with the Holy Spirit and become adopted sons of God; only they make up the body of Christ, the church. No one besides the 144,000 may participate in the "memorial," the Lord's Supper.⁵ The experience defined by Paul with the formula "in Christ" is also to be enjoyed only by them. Only they, for example, may "seek the things that are above" as recommended in Col 3:1. Only they judge and reign with Christ in heaven. Only they enter the Kingdom of God. The other sheep, at best, are subjects of the Kingdom. This means, in fact, that a vast portion of the NT, with its promises, warnings, etc., is applicable only to the 144,000 and not to the larger group of "other sheep." Anthony Hoekema remarks:

By their sharp division of believers into two classes, the Watchtower Society actually makes a large part of the Bible, 

¹Let God Be, p. 139.
³The "other sheep" will be justified at the end of the millennium on the basis of their own works, as noted. However, even the experience of righteousness by faith enjoyed by the 144,000 is understood in a different way from that of the evangelical thought.
⁴The "other sheep" are baptized only as an act of dedication to Jehovah but not to signify the experience of dying and being raised with Christ.
⁵In 1965 there was a world-wide memorial attendance of 1,933,089, in which only 11,550 participated. See Life Everlasting, pp. 148, 149.
particularly of the New Testament, meaningless for the majority of its adherents. For all Scriptural passages dealing with regeneration, sanctification, anointing, and consecration; all passages which speak of being sealed by the Spirit, filled with the Spirit, or testified to by the Spirit; all passages which describe the body of Christ, the bride of Christ, the new creation, the holy nation, and the elect (the list is far from exhaustive) are intended, so the Witnesses say, only for the anointed class and mean nothing for the other sheep. Surely this is a kind of divisive criticism of the Bible that is just as damaging to its authority and comfort as are the irreverent scissors of the higher critic!¹

The making up of the 144,000 began on Pentecost with the baptism of three thousand converts (Acts 2:41).² It is finished some time during the millennium when the last of their members dies and is raised as spirit creature to be taken to heaven.³ But none of the 144,000 went to heaven until 1918. In this year the first resurrection began. The members of the "little-flock" dead since the first century were raised as spirit creatures, thence invisible to the human eyes, and were taken to heaven.⁴ The other members of

¹Hoekema, p. 285.

²Things, p. 241; Paradise, p. 148. The "other sheep" began to be gathered from 1931 on (Life Everlasting, pp. 368, 372).

³Babylon, p. 637. In Life Everlasting, p. 148, we find that almost 70,000 members of the 144,000 were alive on earth in 1939. In other words, it took more than 1,900 years for God to gather the first half of this group. This is indicative of the religious exclusivism of the sect. One can be saved only if he accepts the Jehovist message which is supposed to fit exactly that of the first century when, as they believe, God gathered the first half.

⁴Let God Be, p. 202. This signifies that the majority of the 144,000 reign with Christ in heaven more than one thousand years, and a small group less than this time. This disagrees with Rev 20:4 which affirms the redeemed will reign with Christ in heaven for one thousand years. Jehovah's Witnesses defend their position by explaining: "The main thing is, not that each and every one of the 144,000 reigns exactly a full thousand years with Christ in heaven, but that Christ himself reigns that long. . . . At God's appointed time the members of the 144,000 join Christ in his reign of that length" (Babylon, p. 637). However, this seems at variance with what the Bible says.
this elect class, who died after 1918, are raised to "spirit life" immediately after their death, equally changed to spirit creatures. This process continues until the completion of the 144,000 during the millennium.

How does this group get to heaven? It is not through the ransom paid by Christ. As we have seen, the ransom, at its best, offers an opportunity to everlasting human life on earth. The 144,000 gain the right to eternal life in heaven not as human beings but as spirit creatures. Therefore all the merit of the ransom is insufficient to assure them such a reward.

But the ransom helps them to get there. To know how, one needs to understand how Jesus obtained heavenly life, for the 144,000 share a resurrection like that of Jesus. We have seen that Jesus on earth was a mere perfect man. His baptism was an act of dedication to God who consecrated Him by the Holy Spirit. Through this experience "God begot Jesus to be his spiritual Son once more instead of Let God Be, pp. 203, 278. Jehovah's Witnesses understand the expression "in a twinkling of an eye" of 1 Cor 15:52 as indicative of this phenomenon: the elect member dies and in the same moment is raised as an invisible spirit creature and flies to heaven.

Jehovah's Witnesses affirm that the first resurrection, that is, the resurrection of the 144,000, occurs in fact with the parousia of Christ. However, they render this Greek term "presence" instead of "coming." To them the "presence" of Jesus took place invisibly from 1914 on and continues until the end of the millennium. By "presence" they mean the beginning of "God's Kingdom in heaven with Christ as King" (Paradise, p. 173). In 1914, with the "presence" of Jesus, the "Gentile times" finished and the "time of the end" began (Man's Salvation, p. 41). By "Gentile times" they understand the "seven times" of Dan 4:16, or 2,520 years computed since B.C. 607 (ibid., p. 198), when, they think, Jerusalem was destroyed by the king of Babylon. In the Spring of 1918 Christ came to his spiritual temple to judge and purify it. "That marked the beginning of the period of judgment and inspection of his spirit-begotten followers [the 144,000]. . . . The dead Christians sleeping in the graves were raised with spirit bodies to join him at the spiritual temple" (Let God Be, pp. 202, 203).
a human Son. This was necessary should Jesus be the "Christ," the King anointed, for "mere man could not be the king of the heavenly government." But before being crowned Jesus had to face suffering and sacrifice. In this case, Jesus dedicated in his baptism his perfect human life to the redemption of sinners. "His human life was devoted beyond recall to buy back for believing men the right to eternal life that had been lost to them by being born sinners." The descent of the Holy Spirit and the voice heard from heaven were the sign of God's approval of such a dedication. Henceforth Jesus became the "spiritual Son of God with his restoration to heavenly spirit life in view." In the baptism he "was begotten or brought forth to be 'a new creature' with spiritual or heavenly hopes." When he sacrificed his human life, God raised him as a spirit creature to immortality in heaven.

The 144,000 follow the same steps to arrive in heaven. Like Jesus, "they must undergo the sacrifice of all human life, right and hopes." But unlike Jesus, they do not have a perfect humanity to be offered. At this point, therefore, the ransom is helpful to them. Notice:

First of all, the creature must exercise faith in God's provision, meaning faith in the shed blood of Christ. This he shows by dedicating himself to God through Christ. Christ Jesus then acts as an advocate, covering the sins of such dedicated one by the merit of his sacrifice. The dedicated one is now in position to be justified or declared righteous by God, and thus he has access to God through Christ Jesus. He has an acceptable

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1Ibid., p. 38.  
2Ibid., p. 136.  
3Truth, pp. 252, 253.  
4God's Eternal Purpose, p. 144.  
5The Kingdom, p. 214.  
6Let God Be, p. 299.
body and the right to perfect life on earth, and all this can be presented for sacrifice with Christ Jesus.¹

Human effort is clearly implied here as necessary for one to receive the benefit of the ransom—he must first dedicate himself to God that his sins may be covered and be justified or declared righteous. But this is only the beginning. He must also be baptized in water and in the Holy Spirit (like Jesus) and carry out his "dedication faithfully until death" seeking to "apply the things that he learns ... be holy even as God is holy ... preach the good news of the Kingdom, and honor Jehovah's name."² Then, through the sacrifice of his human rights he can reach heaven.

Therefore, the acceptance of the ransom is not enough to lead the 144,000 to heaven. In reality it does not have the power to do this. It gives them only the opportunity to do what is required to gain heaven. In the final analysis, to get there they must work in addition to what Christ did for them. "They must carry out their agreement. To turn back would mark them as agreement-breakers worthy of death annihilation."³ Heaven is gained through human merit. "By practicing what is good in this earthly life as imitators of Jesus Christ, and by proving faithful to death, the 144,000 are judged worthy of the 'first resurrection' to heavenly

¹Ibid. Some questions arise naturally from this quotation: Why can only the members of the "little flock" receive the right to perfect life on earth immediately after they believe in the ransom, and not the "other sheep" who will have this right only at the end of the millennium or after their passing the final test? Are there two kinds of belief in Jesus, one with short term benefits and another with longer ones? Why does every believer of the "great crowd" not sacrifice his earthly life to receive also a heavenly reward? Is going to heaven or remaining on earth only a question of personal choice?

²Ibid., pp. 301, 302. ³Ibid., pp. 302, 303.
life as immortal, incorruptible spirit sons of God."^1

Critique of Watchtower Soteriology

Considering the above, the Watchtower concepts of salvation are seen to be totally contrary to the clear teaching of the Bible.

The True Meaning of the Ransom

The Bible does present the death of Jesus as a ransom in behalf of sinners, as noted in chapter 2. Redemption is one of the biblical terms closely linked to the saving meaning of the cross. However, the sense of the ransom is more profound than Jehovah's Witnesses can perceive. Through his death Christ did not buy for the believers only a chance to be faithful to God so that they may attain salvation. He paid the full price for salvation so that believers might have eternal life in his sacrifice. "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph 1:7). Such forgiveness means that we can enjoy salvation now, not only at the end of the millennium. "He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins" (Col 1:13). In fact he who believes in the Son "has eternal life" (John 3:36).

The acceptance of Christ's sacrifice on our behalf is not something one must do among other things that salvation may be achieved; Christ is for us everything we need to be saved. God "is

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^1Things, p. 367.
the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor 1:30). As the second Adam, he is also our second chance. We are saved on account of his faithfulness, and not ours. Our Christian life of obedience to God's will is a result from our enjoyment of his salvation, not as a prerequisite to it.

Therefore, salvation is not a reward for good works and faithfulness; it is a gift. "For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God" (Eph 2:8). "He saved us, not because of deeds done by us in righteousness, but in virtue of his own mercy" (Titus 3:5). Christ's life and sacrifice have fully satisfied the requirements of God's justice. When we receive him as our Lord and Savior there is nothing anymore to condemn us. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). As Stanley Gundry puts it:

The righteous demands of a holy God were satisfied. From the standpoint of redemption Christ's substitutionary death is a ransom price that delivers from the slavery and condemnation of sin and makes us Christ's. God does it all for us--it is the gift of His grace. This is the good news. Man has only to accept in faith what the Substitute has done.

Since Christ offered a substitutionary sacrifice, provision for salvation of all man (including Adam, father of the race) was made. Jesus "is the expiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world" (John 2:2). However, this salvation is applicable only to those who believe (John 3:16).

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Not Only 144,000 Will Be in Heaven

That the great crowd go also to heaven is evident from the fact that John saw them "standing before the throne" as well as the 144,000 (Rev 7:9; 14:3).

The Watchtower view of the 144,000 divides the Christian community into two parties. However, the church is the entire community and not an elite drawn from it. Any human being who believes in Jesus becomes a member of his body, the church. Furthermore, the Christian hope is one, and not two--heavenly and earthly. "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all" (Eph 4:4-6). Of course, this passage and many others with their promises, warnings, words of encouragement, and so forth, are applicable to all Christians of all times. The Bible cannot be divided. Its teachings are able to instruct any man "for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim 3:15).

The very manner in which Jehovah's Witnesses rationalize how an individual becomes a member of the 144,000 and receives a heavenly reward does not fit their own soteriological concepts. For example, the affirmation that a man who is justified by faith has an acceptable body is questionable. The Bible says that in spite of our believing in Jesus we carry on our sinful nature until that day when he "shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body" (Phil 3:20). Until that day there is no human perfection to be sacrificed to God for the sake of a heavenly hope. To be consistent with their own teaching,
Jehovah's Witnesses should believe that the 144,000 spend the millennium on "paradise earth" along with the great crowd in a process of human perfectioning until the end when, fully perfect, they are able to sacrifice a perfect humanity to receive a heavenly spirit life. The way to heaven for the 144,000 is much easier than the way to eternal life on earth, since the great crowd has to do practically everything the little flock must do, and still endure faithfully one thousand years of discipline and trials, as well as a final test at the hands of Satan at the end of the millennium, without the help of a heavenly mediator.

Conclusion

It is evident that Jehovah's Witnesses maintain a very narrow concept of sin and its consequences. Death is understood only in terms of annihilation and sin is not considered in its essential character; it is something that Adam committed through his act of disobedience, whose consequences can be undone by another Adam. Only one passage of the NT is enough to pulverize any quantitative concept of sin and solution for it. "Where sin increased, grace abounded all the more" (Rom 5:21). Sin is to be understood in qualitative terms and the solution for it is not a mere human sacrifice that corresponds mathematically to the human fault. The human act of disobedience is only one particular to be dealt with. The plan of salvation has to do with sin as an active principle in the universe, separating man from God by an infinite gap and subjecting him to the payment of an equally infinite debt.¹ This

¹As to the meaning of ἀντικλητοῦ in 1 Tim 2:6, see Walter Lock, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles,
indeed means that even though only one man were a sinner amidst billions of others fully perfect and righteous, the death of these righteous billions would not be sufficient to pay the penalty of his sin and rescue him. His sinful condition and his personal sins would require a sacrifice of infinite value, should he be saved. Only a God/man could offer such a sacrifice.

For Jehovah's Witnesses the plan of salvation has to do more with political vindication than with real salvation from sin. No matter whether an individual is justified by faith or not, if he "believes in the Theocracy," that is, if he cooperates so that the government of God may be vindicated (by following the guidelines proposed by the Society in Brooklyn), he will not be annihilated in Armageddon and will be able afterwards to work for eternal life in paradise earth. After all, Jehovah's Witnesses are preoccupied more with surviving Armageddon than with deliverance from sin. Unfortunately they forget that the former depends totally upon the latter, and that the latter depends totally upon the real meaning of Calvary. To them this is not important, for deliverance from sin comes naturally during the millennium while one strives to reach eternal life. All that one needs to do now is to follow the criteria established by the Society in Brooklyn, New York.¹ Therefore, why would Jehovah's Witnesses need a God/man Savior?

¹That to Jehovah's Witnesses salvation is grounded upon loyalty to their leaders is clearly evident from this statement published in the magazine Watchtower of August 1, 1981: "Your attitude toward the wheatlike anointed 'brothers' of Christ . . . will
Thus, by lessening the gravity of sin they are led to depreciate the person of Christ. J. H. Gerstner says:

Consistently with this, an exceedingly low view of Christ may be expected. For if God's honor is so meager and man's sin so slight, what need could there be of a great salvation or great Savior? The virgin birth is denied; the incarnation becomes a mere change of natures; the atonement merely satisfies for Adam's sin and incidently provides a ransom which does not ransom anyone but merely gives everyone another chance or second probation; at death the human Jesus "dissolved into gas" and remains extinct forever, it being the spirit Jesus who rose from the dead; materializations of a body were effected to give the apostles the impression of a resurrected body. . . . Needless to say, although the Witnesses regard Christ as the firstborn of the creation, the ransomer who provides a second chance for all who need it, the leader of Jehovah's people in their witnessing to him, he is far short of being very God of very God.2

Forasmuch as the sacrifice at Calvary is considered of so little value, it is no wonder that Christ is seen to be not more than a mere creature, as divine as the 144,000 with him in heaven.3 As the Bible says, "Deep calls to deep" (Ps 42:7); one error leads to another.

However, when a Jehovah's Witness is asked why he does not accept the full deity of Jesus Christ, he asserts that his view is supported by the Bible. We cannot believe such an assumption. A demonstration of this is the purpose of the next chapter.

1 Here is an apparent mistake by this author. What Jehovah's Witnesses deny is the incarnation, not the virgin birth.


3 To Jehovah's Witnesses the 144,000 become, at the first resurrection, not only spirit creatures but divine creatures. They become virtually equal to Christ, to the point of helping him to bring back the dead from the graves (New Heavens, p. 320; This Means, p. 275).
CHAPTER IV

CHRIST, GOD OR A GOD? THE VITAL ISSUE

Jehovah's Witnesses affirm that their belief in the sub-deity of Jesus has strong biblical evidence. However, in order to get this evidence it is necessary to alter the testimony of the NT regarding his full deity. The purpose of this chapter is to consider the Johannine passages that most explicitly present Christ as God, and their significance for man's salvation. Of course, other passages of the NT also present Jesus as God, but they do so to a lesser extent.\(^1\) John's writings, his gospel in particular, appear to be the result of sustained theological reflection upon Jesus. As David L. Mealand declares, "In this gospel the divinity of Christ is dominant."\(^2\) Passages discussed in this chapter are John 1:1; 1:18; 20:28; and 1 John 5:20, 21.

**John 1:1**

John 1:1 is the text most often encountered in Christological controversies with Jehovah's Witnesses. The key phrase is καὶ ἄρεσ.


In this syntax λόγος is the subject since it is preceded by the article, so the correct translation is "the Word was God."\(^1\)

Jehovah's Witnesses translate this phrase "the Word was a god,"\(^2\) expressing their belief that in deity, Jesus is inferior to the Father.\(^3\) In order to justify the presence of the indefinite article in their translation, they argue that in the Greek text θεός is anarthrous. Since normally an anarthrous word may be translated with an indefinite article, they believe this to be true in this case. The phrase "a god" would point to the inferiority of the Son since θεός in 1:1b, 2, referring to the Father, is preceded by the article\(^4\)--κοινωνία θεοῦ λόγου πρὸς τὸν θεόν, "the Word was with God." However, as A. T. Robertson has demonstrated, the meaning of the preposition πρὸς, "with," here is "face to face"\(^5\) and implies "the most intimate fellowship as equals."\(^6\) On the other hand

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\(^2\)See this passage in NWT; see also Let God Be, p. 106.

\(^3\)NWT uses a lower case letter in the word God here. Since the inferiority of the Son is implied in His creation, it is noteworthy that this translation disagrees with the very text constantly mentioned to identify their religious movement, Isa 43:10, where it is stated that no God was formed after Jehovah.

\(^4\)See appendix to The Kingdom Interlinear Translation of the Greek Scriptures (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1969), pp. 1158, 1159.


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the lack of the article is due simply to a matter of phraseology\(^1\) conditioned to that which John wanted to transmit. We can hardly suppose that he wanted to affirm that the Word was "\textit{a god}," not only because of his monotheistic religious background,\(^2\) but especially because his gospel reaches its climax with the confession of the full deity of Jesus in 20:28 where θεὸς applied to Jesus is preceded by the article.

Furthermore, θεὸς is anarthorous sixteen times throughout the Fourth Gospel, two times only applicable to the Son: 1:1c and 10:33, both rendered "\textit{a god}" in the NWT. The other fourteen are rendered "\textit{God}," including 8:54 where the anarthrous θεὸς is

concludes: "The personal being of the Word was realized in active intercourse with and in perfect communion with God" (John, p. 3). The parallel with "in the bosom of the Father" (vs. 18) is striking.  

\(^1\) E. C. Colwell's rule for the use of the article in the Greek of the NT establishes that "a definite predicate nominative has the article when it follows the verb; it does not have the article when it precedes the verb. . . . The absence of the article does not make the predicate indefinite or qualificative when it precedes the verb; it is indefinite in this position only when the context demands it. "A Definite Rule for the Use of the Article in the Greek New Testament," Journal of Biblical Literature 52 (1933): 13, 21. In regard to John 1:1 he says: "The context makes no such demand in the Gospel of John, for this statement cannot be regarded as strange in the Prologue of the Gospel which reaches its climax in the confession of Thomas" (p. 21). The viability of this rule can be evidenced in such passages as John 3:10; 19:21; 9:5; 10:7; Heb 5:5, among others. The conclusions of Colwell also conspire against the idea that the anarthrous predicate in John 1:1 is a mere generality, as alleged by Jehovah's Witnesses. See Equipped for Every Good Work (Brooklyn, NY: Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, 1946), pp. 34, 35. See also Bruce M. Metzger's comment on Colwell's rule in "On the Translation of John 1:1," The Expository Times 63 (1951/1952):125, 126.

\(^2\) The simple fact that John was a monetheist Jew discards any hypothesis of a possible grammatical parallelism between John 1:1c and Acts 28:6 as Jehovah's Witnesses intend (Kingdom Interlinear, p. 1160). Here the inhabitants of Malta believed Paul to be "\textit{a god}" (θεὸς) but they were pagan gentiles. See John F. Mattingly, "Jehovah's Witnesses Translate the New Testament," The Catholic Biblical Quarterly 13 (Oct. 1951):441.
predicative (as in 1:1c) and applicable to the Father.\(^1\) Here, therefore, there is an inconsistency with what Jehovah's Witnesses themselves affirm. Actually 1:1c is not translated but interpreted.\(^2\) Wainwright states: "There is no reason to suppose that a deliberate contrast is intended" in this passage.\(^3\) The correct translation is "God" and not "a god."\(^4\)

\(^1\)This means that John could have reversed himself and applied an anarthrous \(\theta\varepsilon\varepsilon\omicron\varsigma\) in 1:1b, 2 to the Father, and in the light of 20:28, an arthrous \(\theta\varepsilon\varepsilon\omicron\varsigma\) to the Son in 1:1c. But he wrote in the way he did for the sake of identification. As Raymond E. Brown says, "Perhaps the best explanation of why the author of the Prologue chose to use \(\theta\varepsilon\varepsilon\omicron\varsigma\) without the article to refer to the Word is that he desired to keep the Word distinct from the Father (ho \(\theta\varepsilon\varepsilon\omicron\varsigma\))." Jesus God and Man (Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Company, 1967), p. 26. See below the discussion of the John's options for the writing of 1:1c. To J. Gwyn Griffiths there can be no differentiation between \(\delta \varepsilon\varepsilon\omicron\varsigma\) and \(\varepsilon\varepsilon\omicron\varsigma\) since, throughout the Gospel, "the article is inserted or omitted, at will, in phrases which obviously bear the same meaning." "A Note on the Anarthrous Predicate in Hellenistic Greek," The Expository Times 62 (1950-1951):315. He mentions as examples the following groups of texts: 1:6 and 9:33 compared to 4:44; 6:46; 8:40; 7:17; and 8:42, 46 compared to 1:13; 19:7 compared to 1:34, 49; 3:18; 5:25; 10:36; 11:4; 20:31.

\(^2\)R. H. Countess has made a critical evaluation of the NWT rendering of \(\varepsilon\varepsilon\omicron\varsigma\) in John 1:1c and concluded that Jehovah's Witnesses are not only inconsistent with themselves but arbitrary in their translation of the Bible. With the help of Moulton and Geden's Concordance to the Greek Testament he determined how many times \(\varepsilon\varepsilon\omicron\varsigma\) is anarthrous in all the NT, checking the passages in the NWT. His conclusion is as follows: "Throughout the New Testament the arthrous \(\varepsilon\varepsilon\omicron\varsigma\) far exceeds the anarthrous, and of 282 occurrences of the anarthrous \(\varepsilon\varepsilon\omicron\varsigma\) NWT sixteen times has either 'a god, god, gods, or godly'. The translators were, therefore, only 6% faithful to their canons enunciated in the appendix to John 1:1—i.e., \(\varepsilon\varepsilon\omicron\varsigma\) = a god and \(\delta \varepsilon\varepsilon\omicron\varsigma\) = God. On the other hand they were 94% unfaithful." "The Translation of \(\varepsilon\varepsilon\omicron\varsigma\) in the New World Translation," Journal of Evangelical Theological Society 10 (Summer 1967):160.


\(^4\)The rendering "the Word was divine" given by Goodspeed and Moffat seems likewise improper, since John would have used the adjectival form \(\varepsilon\varepsilon\omicron\varsigma\) instead of \(\varepsilon\varepsilon\omicron\varsigma\), had he wanted to affirm exactly this.
What then did John intend to transmit in John 1:1c? First let us consider what John did not write and why not.

1. ὁ λόγος ἦν θεός. Although not antigrammatical, such a construction goes against good style. Scholars in general recognize the poetic language of the Johannine prologue whose structure presents various parallel lines. The normal flow of rhythm required θεός ἦν ὁ λόγος. Moreover, John wanted θεός "to be stressed. Hence he placed it at the beginning of the clause. In order to show that it was predicative he had to omit the article." 

2. λόγος ἦν θεός. This reading here has θεός as subject and indicates that λόγος comprises all that God was. But the Word was God, not God was the Word. So John did not use such a construction and excluded "any Sabellian notion that the God-head was exhausted in the Logos." 

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1 Colwell's rule has its exceptions. See Colwell, pp. 18, 19. Furthermore Philip B. Harner has demonstrated that John is familiar with the construction where the verb precedes an anarthrous predicate. "Qualitative Anarthrous Predicate Nouns: Mark 15:39 and John 1:1," Journal of Biblical Literature 92 (1973):82.


3 Wainwright, p. 279.

4 Cf. 1 John 4:8, ὁ θεός ἡγανίμεν ἔστιν, "God is love" but never "Love is God." C. K. Barrett says: "The absence of the article indicates that the Word is God, but is not the only being of whom this is true; if ho theos had been written it would have been implied that no divine being existed outside the second person of the Trinity." The Gospel According to John (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1978), p. 156. Elsewhere he says: "The fact that θεός is anarthrous does not make it mean something less than God: the word is not indeed the whole content of deity, yet he is (not divine in a secondary sense but) God." "The Father is greater than I' (John 14:28): Subordinationist Christology in the New Testament," Neues Testament und Kirche, ed. Joachim Gnilka (Vienna: Herder, 1974), p. 148.

5 Edward L. Miller, ed. "'The Logos Was God'," The Evangelical Quarterly 53 (April-June 1981):73. Sabellianism is the heretical
3. ὁ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος and ὁ λόγος ἦν ὁ θεὸς. These phrases offer the problem of being convertible propositions; both can be translated either "God was the Word" or "The Word was God." If ὁ θεὸς is taken as the subject we have the same sense of construction (2); if ὁ λόγος is taken as the subject the personal distinction between the λόγος and ὁ θεὸς, adequately established in 1:1b, 2, is destroyed—the λόγος becomes the same ὁ θεὸς with Whom he is affirmed to be in the beginning.

Therefore there was only one way John could write that which he wanted to communicate: ὁ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. With such a construction he maintains the personal distinction between Son and Father and affirms the full participation of the Son in the essence of the divine nature. There is a distinction of person and a unity of substance. Therefore, the λόγος is not a god, but he is God "in the sense that the Father is God."教学 that one person in the Godhead manifests Himself in three different ways: as Father, as Son, and as Holy Spirit, which is clearly denied by the NT. Jesus was never identified with the Father.

1 It seems that in 1:4, ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀνθρώπινον, a convertible proposition was in fact intended since Jesus, in the Fourth Gospel, is both light and life (8:12; 9:5; 12:35; 11:25; 14:6).

2 Robertson, The Divinity of Christ, p. 40. Cf. SDABC, 5:897: "John means that the Word partook of the essence of Deity, that He was divine in the ultimate and absolute sense. Thus in one terse declaration John denies that the Word was either a God, one among many, or the God, as if He alone were God." So John 1:1 is basic for the formulation of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity--three persons and one God. This distinctive doctrine of historical Christianity is of course rejected by Jehovah's Witnesses. However, the question asked them by Victor Perry, "Assuming the orthodox position to be correct, how would John have written this clause in Greek?" remains unanswered. He wrote twice to them for an answer. But all he got was their acquiescence that if John had put the article before ὁ θεὸς one could never know who is the subject of the sentence. Perhaps this can be considered as an assent that the translation "the
John 1:18

μονογενής θεός translated to "the only God." Although the reading μονογενής υἱός, "only Son," has the support of several manuscripts and is attested by a great number of fathers, μονογενής θεός is to be preferred for at least three reasons:

1. This reading is supported by the best and most reliable Greek manuscripts as well as the earliest patristic witnesses.¹

2. It is more adequate to the chiastic structure of the Johannine prologue. The evangelist opens his prologue with a statement about the deity of the Word ("the Word was God") and closes it with the same truth. The close fellowship of the Word with God ("the Word was with God") is also reaffirmed ("who is in the bosom of the Father").²

3. A scribal alteration from "God" to "Son" is much more reasonable and natural since μονογενής υἱός is a Johannine combination (John 3:16, 18; 1 John 4:9). The uniqueness of μονογενής θεός turns it more susceptible to change. Leon Morris says: "It is not easy to see what would cause anyone who had 'Son' before him to make 'Word was God' is, after all, correct. "But they do not answer the question," Perry says. "Is an answer to my question possible? Yes--John would have written the clause exactly as it is written! And this Jehovah's Witnesses cannot admit." "Jehovah's Witnesses and the Deity of Christ," The Evangelical Quarterly 35 (1963):20.

¹The manuscripts supporting μονογενής θεός are: p66 (a papyrus from about A.D. 200); P75 (an early third-century papyrus); Η (Codex Sinaiticus, fourth century); B (Codex Vaticanus, fourth century); C (Codex Ephraemi, fifth century), and 33 (ninth or tenth century). Two ancient versions also present this reading: the Boharitic version, fourth century; and the Peshitta Syriac, or Syriac vulgate. Some of the Church Fathers who used this reading are Irenaeus (second century), Clement (third century), and Origen (third century).

alter this to 'God'.

μονογενὴς θεός cannot be considered a result of the later anti-Arian polemic since Arians also adopted this reading.

**Jesus Is God Revealed**

It is evident that in 1:18 the evangelist bonds the two predicates previously applied to Jesus (θεός, vs. 1, and μονογενὴς, vs. 14) in order to stress the uniqueness and intimacy of his relationship with God. He is μονογενὴς θεός, God the only Son, and as such only he "saw" God and can reveal him. The verb "to see" (ὁράω) in the perfect tense points beyond the mere act of seeing with the eye to a parallel experience of knowing God perfectly as in Matt 11:27: "No one knows the Father except the Son."

Moses, who is referred to in vs. 17, indeed beheld the form

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1 Morris, p. 113.

2 See F. Louis Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Zonderfan Publishing House, 1944), 1:281. For the use of Johannine texts in the Arian controversy, both by Athanasius and Arius, see M. F. Wiles, *The Spiritual Gospel* (Cambridge: University Press, 1960), pp. 120-28. Neither do Jehovah's Witnesses reject this reading today (see John 1:18, NWT). However, μονογενὴς θεός to them is only a restatement that Jesus is "a god." (See Aid, p. 919).


5 Godet thinks it denotes a result and not an act: "No one is in possession of the sight of God and consequently no one speaks of Him de visu." To him sight here is a symbol of the "central and living knowledge of God which is the only true knowledge" (p. 280).

6 Godet recalls the intimate relation of thought between vs. 17 and vs. 18 (p. 280).
of Jehovah (Num 12:8), although without seeing his face (Exod 33:20). But now, John says that "no one has seen God."\(^1\) It is in his essential being that God was never seen by any creature. "Men had had their visions of God, but these were all partial. The theophanies of the Old Testament did not and could not reveal God's essential being."\(^2\) Only Christ, because he shares essentially the divinity of the Father, has seen God. And since he has become flesh (vs. 14) without losing his divine status,\(^3\) he can make God known to men.

B. F. Westcott declares:

He [man] can come to know Him [God] only through one who shares both the human and divine natures, and who is in vital fellowship both with God and with man. In Christ this condition is satisfied. He who as the Word has been declared to be God, who as the Son is one in essence with the Father, even He set forth that which we need to know.\(^4\)

"The point," Lindars says, "is that only God can reveal God."\(^5\) However, since no man can see God and live, as was said to Moses, the incarnation (vs. 14) becomes indispensable for through it man is enabled to know God and to live;\(^6\) or as Robertson puts it: "Only

\(^1\) L. Abbott thinks that this "no one" also includes the angels. An Illustrated Commentary on the Gospel According to St. John (New York: A. S. Barnes & Company, 1888), p. 21. Evidently he also accepts the wider sense of "seeing" that we are discussing.

\(^2\) Morris, p. 113.

\(^3\) This is evident from the fact that immediately after stating that "the Word became flesh" John subjoins: "We have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father." See Robert Kysar, "The Contributions of the Prologue of the Gospel of John to New Testament Christology and their Historical Setting," Currents in Theology and Mission 5 (1978):352, 353.


the God-man can fully reveal God to man. He is God and He is man and can and does act as interpreter of God to man.¹

The theme of 1:18 is present throughout the Fourth Gospel. For example, 14:8-11 registers the explicit statements of Jesus, "He who has seen me has seen the Father," and "I am in the Father and the Father in me," which stress his sharing in the divine nature and essence of the Father so that he can reveal him.² Another example is 3:11-13 where Jesus speaks about heavenly things with a familiarity and naturality proper only to someone who has come down from heaven, but, in some way, without leaving there. "Who is in heaven" (vs. 13)³ is parallel to "I am in the Father" (14:10), and "who is in the bosom of the Father" (1:18).⁴ "Heaven" here has a moral rather

¹Robertson, The Divinity of Christ, p. 45.

²"Here we reach the central truth, on which all else depends. . . . All that is passing is to be read as a history, not of God and Christ, but of God in Christ" (Bernard, John, 1:148). Therefore we know the Father in his Son, while the Father knows us in our Savior. "Every aspect of Jesus' character unveils for us an aspect of the character of the Lord of heaven and earth. Every experience through which Jesus passed in His life with men suggests to us an experience through which our Father is passing with us His children. The cross of Calvary is a picture of the age-long and present sacrifice of our God as He suffers with and for us. The open grave is for us the symbol of His unconquerable love, stronger than the world and sin and death. God's embodiment of Himself in this Son, made in all points like ourselves, attests the essential kinship between Him and us--God's humanity and our potential divinity" (Coffin, pp. 135, 136).

³It is true that only a few Greek manuscripts contain this reading. But with R. E. Brown we are prone to believe that its omission in a good deal of manuscripts as well as the alteration to "who was in heaven" in some ancient versions, were intended to remove the obvious difficulty the reading creates. Its originality is coherent with that which we are discussing. As Brown says, "The Son in John remains close to the Father even when he is on earth" (John I-XII, p. 133).

⁴Godet suggests that ἀναβαύω (perfect tense of ἀναβαχώ, "to go up") in 3:13 indicates that Christ is in heaven: "He lives there, as having ascended thither." With this he concludes that "the
local sense and indicates the only position from which true and complete knowledge about God can be brought. "No one has entered into communion with God and possesses thereby an intuitive knowledge of divine things in order to reveal them to others, except He to whom heaven was opened and who dwells there at His very moment."\(^1\)

It can be taken for His equality with God from which He came down by means of the incarnation\(^2\) (Phil 2:6-8), but which He still retains while on earth (John 5:18).\(^3\)

Morris seems to indicate Isa 14:12 as a probable OT background for John 3:13, where the ambitions of the "son of morning"

\[\text{Lord led two lives parallel to each other, an earthly life and a heavenly life. He lived in His Father and while living thus with the Father, He gave Himself unceasingly to men in His human life} \quad (1:390). \] In other words, this is a statement of the two natures of Christ.

\(^1\)Godet, 1:390. Cf. Bernard, John 1:149: "The secret of all is in the mystery of the mutual indwelling, in the harmony of action, mind, and will, resting on the essential unity of nature."

\(^2\)Therefore the use of the title "Son of Man" by Jesus in 3:13 is appropriate since it implies his incarnation. "Son of Man, brings out the human side in this heavenly revealer" (Godet, 1:390).

\(^3\)Commenting on Phil 2:6-8, H. S. Coffin observes that "if there was an 'emptying' there was also a 'filling', so that we see in Him the fullness of God" (p. 116). It seems that this is what Paul declares in Phil 2. W. E. Ward agrees with the suggestion of William H. Davis "that Paul is not talking about what the Son gave up, but what He gained; not the royal status He forsook, but the role of the Servant He chose. ... Kenô should be understood in the sense of emptying the contents of one vessel into another vessel, so that it was a matter of pouring the same content into another form: Christ emptied Himself (i.e., poured Himself) into the form of a servant." W. E. Ward, "The Person of Christ: The Kenotic Theory," Basic Christian Doctrines, ed. C. F. Henry (New York: Holt, Rineheart and Winston, 1962), p. 135. Then he concludes: "The context emphasizes the change of form, not the change of content, of the Divine Being. He did not give up deity, but He gained humanity. There was no attrition of the divine nature in the incarnation; His life incarnate, containing the fullness of the Godhead bodily, was offered for man's redemption" (p. 136). We have already seen that the true concept of incarnation is that of addition and not of subtraction.
are to ascend into heaven and to be "like the Most High." However
"he could not do it. It remained a boast and an ambition."\(^1\) Another
probable background is the experience of Moses' forty days in the
mountain with God (Exod 34:28). Since he is mentioned in vs. 14,
this would be in parallel to 1:17 in the prologue. We can imagine
that the glory in the face of Moses when he came down from the
presence of God (Exod 34:29-35) is typological of the divine glory
of Jesus manifested when he came down from heaven, namely, during
his earthly ministry.

However the glory of Jesus is not to be paralleled to that
manifested in Moses; it is to be contrasted to it. Moses had had
only forty days of communion with God to make his face bright. But
Jesus was with God or in the bosom of the Father from eternity, and
he can manifest the glory which is not only one with the glory of
the Father (17:5) but which is his own glory (vs. 24). Like the
glory on the face of Moses which had to be veiled for the sake of
Israel, so the glory of the Son was veiled by the veil of his flesh
(Heb 10:19) for our sake. Israel in the desert had sinned against
God\(^2\) and therefore they could not contemplate the glory of God in
Moses. In reality, the problem was not the glory in the face of
Moses but the sin in the people. Because of sin they could not
behold the glory in Moses. In the same way those who persisted in
unbelief and sin could not see the glory of Jesus and discern

\(^1\) Morris, p. 223. In this case what Lucifer coveted belonged
naturally to Christ. Jehovah's Witnesses' view is totally opposite
to this (see above pp. 70, 71).

\(^2\) Particularly by worshiping the golden calf, Exod 32.
him as God. When Jesus explicitly affirmed his divine nature and
condition, and his oneness with the Father, his detractors tried to
kill him (5:18; 10:30-33). Even when Jesus manifested visibly his
glory in the garden (18:6) they persisted in their unbelief and
led him to the cross. Paul says that until now a veil "lies over
their minds" so that they reject Jesus as their Lord (2 Cor 3:13-16).
Indeed such words do not apply only to the Jews, but to every one
who does not acknowledge the deity of Jesus. But those who believe
on Him behold his glory (1:14).¹ Faith enters beyond the veil and
turns his glory apprehendable.

In fact, since the entrance of sin into this world, faith
has been the appointed way through which man can behold God and
return to him. But faith would be of no value if God himself had
not taken the initiative to seek man. Such an act of God becomes
effective through the incarnation. "For the Son of man came to seek
and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). For our sake God covered
himself with the veil of the human flesh, for only in this way could
we know God and reach eternal life (John 17:3). In other words,
icarnation was the way found by God to manifest himself to sinners.
This is a paradoxical fact--by hiding in human flesh God reveals
himself. Calvin discusses this in his theory of Occultatio. Christ
came to the world not in the glory and majesty proper of God, but in
the form of a humiliated servant. During the time he was on earth
the divine glory was hidden, veiled in human flesh. However, there

¹Cf. 2 Cor 3:16, 18: "But when a man turns to the Lord the
veil is removed. . . . And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the
glory of the Lord, are being changed into his likeness from one degree
of glory to another. . . ."
is a simultaneous occultation/revelation\(^1\) in Jesus. The revelation of God through Christ is possible only because God hid himself in human flesh. "God appears in Christ, not in his majesty, but in our humanity and is very close to us."\(^2\)

**Faith Recognizes His Deity**

If faith without the incarnation is nothing, incarnation without faith in man cannot reach its revelational purpose. To those who did not believe, the ministry of Jesus culminating on the cross was a scandal and stumbling stone (1 Cor 1:23). John registers in his gospel that when the crowd heard the discourse of Jesus about his sacrifice in behalf of the world they were offended and forsook him (6:60, 66). Jesus then connected his condition of humiliation to his divine position saying: "Do you take offense at this? Then what if you were to see the Son of man ascending where he was before?" (vss. 61, 62). In the midst of generalized disbelief those who believed had a special revelation and could join Peter in his confession: "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know that you are the Holy One of God" (vss. 68, 69).\(^3\) So the manifestation of

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\(^1\)J. Ratzinger stresses this paradox observing that "the revelation is at the same moment the cause of the most extreme obscurity and concealment" (p. 28). Thence the value of faith to make the revelation effective is incalculable. "Christian belief . . . means opting for the view that what cannot be seen is more real than what can be seen" (p. 43). Bonhoeffer, p. 46, speaks in terms of "hiddenness in the 'likeness of the sinful flesh'."

\(^2\)Cit. in Berkouwer, p. 354.

\(^3\)Cf. Matt 16:17. Paul defines the reaction of both believers and unbelievers in these terms: "We preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and wisdom of God" (1 Cor 1:23, 24).
God in the humanity of Jesus becomes effective through a divine element present in our humanity—faith. The measure of divine manifestation of Jesus to man depends upon the measure of faith in man.  

In the Gospel of John true disciples are those who can discern the divine origin of Christ. It is true that such a perception reaches its climax after the resurrection, but from the beginning of his ministry, faith is already present in them to the point that they acknowledge him as the Son of God (1:49) and behold his glory (2:11). In fact to believe is the means by which one can see (11:40), but the main emphasis is that faith is a positive reaction to the

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Only in this aspect can we agree with Albrecht Ritschl when he says that the "affirmation of His Deity is an estimate, made by believers, of Jesus' worth to them; they cannot prove it to any who are without a sense of Christ's value as their Savior" (cited in Coffin, p. 115). Here, therefore, Christology and Soteriology are once more mutually dependent. Indeed we are saved because we have a divine Savior, while we acknowledge his deity because we believe and are saved. By establishing human reason as a criterion for the understanding and acceptance of certain biblical themes (for example, the Holy Trinity), Jehovah's Witnesses close the door for a wider perception of God's revelation. The person of Christ as well as his expiatory work are not issues to be measured with a rationalistic yardstick (see Pieper, 2:354). Not that God's revelation is contrary to reason, but it goes beyond human reason and can be apprehended only by faith. C. S. Lewis says: "He [God] shows much more of Himself to some people than to others—not because He has favorites, but because it is impossible for Him to show Himself to a man whose whole mind and character are in the wrong condition." Beyond Personality (New York: Macmillan Company, 1947), p. 12. Paul is clear in declaring that for the "unspiritual man" the things of God are folly (1 Cor 2:14). This also means that faith cannot compete with reason in terms of logic. "If Christianity was something we were making up, of course we could make it easier. But it isn't. We can't compete, in simplicity, with people who are inventing religions" (ibid., p. 13). If we are to convince Jehovah's Witnesses of their error and help them to receive the full revelation of God in Christ and to embrace the salvation he has so provided, faith, before anything else, has to be the prevailing element in them.
experience of seeing. This is particularly true in regard to the miracles the disciples witness. To them such miracles are ονεμέα, "signs" of his glory (2:11). As the earthly ministry of Jesus is developed and fulfilled, his words and works, the disclosure of his own being, establish a crescendo of faith which culminates in the confession of Thomas: "My Lord and my God" (20:28). R. E. Brown explains:

The disciples who believed at Cana (2:11) are still growing in faith in 6:60-71 and 14:5-12. Full salvific faith in Jesus is a gift of God which, like the gift of the Spirit, can come only after the resurrection. This is seen in the fullest profession of faith in the Gospel.2

Here the apprehension of his glory reaches its climax and the disciple reveals a faith that Jesus wants for each of his followers: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (vs. 29).

John 20:28

ο κυρίος μου καὶ ο θεός μου is rendered "my Lord and my God."

These are the memorable words of Thomas and, as we said, they indicate the culminating point of faith in the disciples.4 Jesus, who in

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1G. L. Phillips understands παρετέδειν in John as the "consummation of many grades of seeing." To him John is "so preoccupied with words of seeing that a scheme may be detected, by which the mounting significance of intensity of vision can be shown to culminate in faith." "Faith and Vision in the Fourth Gospel," Studies in the Fourth Gospel, ed. F. L. Cross (London: A. R. Mowbray & Company, 1957), pp. 85, 83.

2Brown, John I-XII, p. 531.

3Westcott speaks in terms of "progress of faith which St. John traces," and observes that vs. 29 shows "that the Lord accepted the declaration of His divinity as the true expression of faith" (p. 356).

4Tenney says that "With the confession of Thomas, John reached the high peak of belief: faith can rise no higher than when
1:1 was affirmed to be God, receives now public recognition of his deity. This is concrete evidence that he really fulfilled his mission of revealing God to man. If chapter 21 is considered an appendix, as it seems to be, we can observe that the evangelist opens and closes his book with an explicit declaration of the deity of Jesus. The words of Thomas, then, can be taken as a plausible conclusion of that which the entire gospel has presented, and the longing of the evangelist that every reader of his book may reach the same quality of faith as expressed in vss. 30, 31.

Jesus: True God, or No God at All

Jehovah's Witnesses interpret 20:28 by saying that Thomas did not recognize Jesus as the true God (they make reference to 17:3) but as the Son of God and therefore an inferior god. This view is in line with their interpretation of 1:1c ("the Word was a god") and inevitably labels Thomas, a zealous Jew, as a polytheist or idolater, since for both OT and NT there is only one God. More censurable yet it avows Jesus of Nazareth to be its Lord and God" (p. 284).

1C. K. Barrett suggests that a "return to the opening proposition of the gospel is intended and there can be no doubt that John intended this confession of faith to form the climax of the Gospel; it is his final Christological pronouncement" (John, p. 573).

2Lindars affirms that Thomas' confession is "a summary of the Gospel as a whole" (p. 616).

3The words expressed by Thomas to Jesus are used in the OT as a declaration of faith in Jehovah (Ps 35:26; 91:2).


5That in their interpretation of John 20:28 once more Jehovah's Witnesses make themselves culpable of polytheism is evident from the statement: "Thomas had to recognize Jesus' Father as God of a God" (ibid., p. 51).
would be the conduct of Jesus permitting himself to be worshipped and addressed with such a confession, an honor to be paid only to God. He himself had said to Satan that only Jehovah was to be worshipped (Matt 4:10). If he permitted Thomas' worship here he now would be following the same path of the Devil by encroaching upon the exclusive rights of God.¹

But if Jesus is not the true God, as Jehovah's Witnesses affirm, what kind of God is he since they acknowledge that he is a god? Besides the only true God, every other God is a false one (Deut 6:4; 4:35, 39; 32:39; Isa 37:20; 44:6; Mark 12:29, 32). In 1 Thess 1:9 the true God is mentioned in opposition to false gods. It would be nonsense for Paul to refer to the experience of the Christians in Thessalonica as turning from false gods, in order to serve the true God, the Father, and a non-true god, Jesus Christ. This would be to turn from one form of polytheism to another. Furthermore, Paul says that these pseudo-gods "by nature are no

¹Commenting on the divine prerogatives claimed by Jesus to Himself, H. W. Fancher concludes: "Either Christ was or He was not sincere in teaching His divine origin, and it must be either true or false. There can be no middle ground with such bold and definite demands before us." Fellowship with God (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1929), p. 127. G. C. Morgan, commenting on the saying "I am" of 8:58, says: "That is a supreme claim to Deity. . . . These are the words of the most impudent blasphemer that ever spoke, or the words of God incarnate." The Gospel According to John (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, n.d.), p. 161. H. de Vos, also says: "Jesus speaks with divine authority and now we have to make our choice: Either he speaks the truth or he does not. If he does not, we have again two possibilities: He utters falsehood either consciously or not. Should it be deliberate falsehood, he is the greatest deceiver known to history; should it be unconscious falsehood, he is the most pathetic victim of religious megalomania known to history. Given these possibilities we prefer to believe that Jesus Christ spoke the truth and had the right to speak with divine authority simply because He was God" (cited by Roark, p. 114).
gods" (Gal 4:8), for they are only "so-called gods" (1 Cor 8:5).

To this apostle, those who are separated from Christ are "without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). We have no choice--either Christ is the true God, or he is no god at all. If this is the case, NT writers and Christians who called him "God" (John and Thomas as examples) made a tremendous mistake. A. A. Hoekema observes:

Thomas being a Jew, was a strict monotheist; for him there was no God beside Jehovah. When he said, "My God" he could have meant nothing other than "my one and only true God." 2

The Meaning of "Son of God" in John

All the difficulty lies in the fact that Jehovah's Witnesses misunderstand the meaning of Son of God in the Fourth Gospel. For John the fact that Jesus is the Son of God 3 makes him equal with God (5:18). 4 In his study of the "Son of God" in John's Gospel, 5

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1 In this category, of course, Satan must be included. He is called "the god of this world" (2 Cor 4:4).

2 Hoekema, p. 343. So Thomas is an example of the ideal disciple not in his doubt about the resurrection of Christ but in his own declaration of faith. (See p. 140, n. 1). As Coffin states, "We are either idolaters, or Jesus is the unveiling in a human life of the Most High; He is to us God manifest in the flesh" (p. 101).

3 Bernard, John, 2:683, observes that "The confession of Thomas goes far beyond the confession of Nathanael (1:49)" who recognized him as the "Son of God."

4 John 14:28, "The Father is greater than I," does not deny the equality of the Son with the Father. The Greek μετάτητος (greater) has a quantitative sense and not a qualitative one (cf. Heb 1:4, κατάτιτος, "better," "superior," expressing a qualitative sense--Christ is superior to angels). The passage, therefore, is to be understood in the light of the incarnation through which Jesus laid aside his glorious position in heaven and took a form of servant on earth. "This is a description of His position as a servant and not a comparison of nature or quality" (Gruss, Apostles, p. 113). Therefore, the inferiority of the Son is one of function, or action, and not of nature (Roark, p. 108). This passage must also be understood in the light of immediate context: the going up of Jesus to the Father to act in behalf of his disciples, mainly in the sending of the Holy Spirit

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D. J. Howton\(^1\) demonstrates that Jesus as the Son of God stands for the entire nation of Israel which in the OT is called by God "my son" (Exod 4:22, 23). This aspect of his sonship is to be seen mainly in the public confession of John the Baptist in 1:29-34.

However, Howton says:

The purpose of St. John is to show his readers that revelation is not yet complete in this confession. . . . He does not yet realize that this one individual . . . is also himself divine and nothing less than God incarnate. This is the message of the Fourth Gospel.\(^2\)

Howton further notes that it is not merely because Jesus claims for himself the title "Son of God" that the Jews try to kill him, (16:7). Jesus at the right hand of the Father would mean a source of greater power for the church. In regard to this, Hoskyns says: "In the Fourth Gospel the phrase greater than means of greater power and authority than (4:21; 8:53; 10:29; 13:16; cf. 1 John 3:20), and this meaning must be relevant here. The humiliation of the Son involved in some real sense a separation from the Father; His glorification and return to the Father restores to Him a position from which He can communicate to His disciples greater power, greater works than these shall he do (the believer); because I go unto the Father (14:12). It is the certainty of union with the Father through faith in the Son, and the promise of the greater power which is to be theirs because of the death and resurrection of Jesus, that renders the saying a consolation to the disciples." Edwin C. Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel (London: Faber and Faber, 1947), p. 464.


\(^2\)Ibid., p. 234. "Son of God" can also be linked to the idea of King of Israel in the confession of Nathanael in 1:49. Indeed the king is called God's son in such passages as 2 Sam 7:14 and Ps 2:7, considered of messianic character by the apostolic church (Acts 13:33; Heb 1:5). But it is evident that "Nathanael could not as yet have understood all that Jesus' sonship involved" (Morris, p. 167). "He is . . . Son in a sense which may include but also exceeds the ideas of the king or Messiah as Son of God, or Hellenistic ideas about sons of God. . . . Jesus is here [the Fourth Gospel] regarded as both divine, and the only Son. . . . The Son is distinct from the Father in being Son and in becoming man, but one with the Father in intention, in essential divinity, and in mutual love" (Mealand, pp. 460, 461). Cf. Evaristo Pinto: "The exclusive relationship between Jesus and
"since they themselves make the same claim" (8:41), but because he, who previously had made himself equal with God (5:18), now applies to himself the divine name--I am (8:58-59). Again the Jews try to kill him when he claims "I and my Father are one" (10:30). Here

"He claims this name [Son of God] in a transcendent sense. . . . He represents not a, nor even the 'Son of God', but sonship of God itself since he is God the Son."^2

In fact the Father is the only true God (17:3), but Jesus, being the Son of God in such a special way, shares both this onlyness

God is not only based on the analogy of the OT election of the messianic king but is a real relationship between Father and Son." "Jesus as Son of God in the Gospels," Biblical Theology Bulletin 4 (1974):87. See also I. Howard Marshall, "The Divine Sonship of Jesus," Interpretation 21 (1967):87-103. To this author Jesus' status of Messiah is dependent upon His condition of Son and not the contrary. "What is of especial importance is that this use of the category of Sonship would be based upon Jesus' consciousness of a unique filial relationship to God rather than upon the conviction that as the Messiah he was the Son of God. . . . Jesus is the Messiah because he is the Son of God rather than vice versa. Sonship is the supreme category of interpretation of the person of Jesus in the Gospels, and messiahship occupies a subordinate place" (pp. 93, 99).

1 Howton, p. 235.

and trueness—He is one with the Father (10:30); he is also the truth (14:6). That is why 1 John 5:20 does call Jesus "True God."\(^1\) He is with God, he comes from God, he reveals God, he is God.\(^2\)

On the other hand, God in 17:3 is the true God because, as Ladd says, "He is the God who in the mission of Christ is acting consistent with His own being, with the relationship that exists between the Creator and a sinful world, and with his own redemptive purpose."\(^3\) Of course, this redemptive purpose is fulfilled through Jesus Christ who not only embodies the truth of God, but also reveals God. Therefore Christ is the visible and definitive manifestation of God to the world. The Fourth Gospel emphasizes this Christological reality by affirming that the words and works of the Son are in fact the words and works of the Father for the same reason that he who sees the Son sees the Father\(^4\) and that he who believes on the Son, believes on God.\(^5\) So the Son is to be honored even as the Father is, and "he who does not honor the Son, does not honor the Father who sent Him" (5:23). Therefore "for John the 'one true God' has a special connotation—he is the God who is known through and in His Son, Jesus Christ, so that a person who does not

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\(^1\) See comment below on 1 John 5:20.

\(^2\) Thus Cyril of Alexandria said that the knowledge of God as the Father really involves a knowledge of the Son of God (see Westcott, John, p. 239).

\(^3\) G. E. Ladd, Theology, p. 267.

\(^4\) See John 5:19-24; 8:28; 12:49; 14:9-11. Barrett says: "The deeds and words of Jesus are the deeds and words of God; if this be not true the book is blasphemous" (p. 156).

\(^5\) εἰς τὸν θεόν ἐστὶν is parallel to εἰς τὸν θεὸν in 14:1.
confess the Son does not confess the 'one true God'. However for the sake of personal distinction, Father and Son are adequately identified in 17:3, which has already occurred in 1:1.

Finally, Jehovah's Witnesses say that we must understand the words of Thomas in the light of the following two verses, 30 and 31, the epilogue of the Gospel. In view of what we have already analyzed, the contrary is true: we must understand vss. 30 and 31 in the light of the entire gospel that culminates in 20:28. The book was written that the reader might come to believe in Jesus as the Son of God and 20:28 shows the climax of such belief. Thomas'

1Brown, John I-XII, p. 752.

2But notice that in 20:21, where John states the purpose of his gospel, to believe in Jesus as the Son of God, or, in the light of vs. 28, to confess him as "my Lord and my God" (see below), is equivalent to know the Father as the only true God and Jesus Christ sent by him, for both experiences result in eternal life (cf. 1 John 2:22-25). Barrett remarks that to know and to believe "are not set against one another but correlated" (p. 504). Also Lindars: "'My God!' is an appropriate expression of faith in Jesus as the exalted Lord. The act of belief not only puts Thomas into relation with the risen Lord, but also with the Father himself" (p. 615).

3Since, as already noted, chap. 21 is, with all probability, an addition or appendix to the original gospel.

4Brown contests the view that in vs. 31 "Son of God" is equivalent to "Messiah," or to a special interpretation of this term. He rightly thinks that the true meaning of Son of God here is to be drawn from the "over-all Gospel picture of Jesus," as having been sent by the Father as his representative in the world, as sharing the special presence of the Father (just as the Father shares the presence of the Son), and as bearing the divine name "I am.

confession is a model for the faith of the church (vs. 29). Jesus is God and Lord of the church, and this is the essence of Christianity. Therefore, vs. 28 related to vss. 30, 31 confirms the Johannine meaning of "Son of God" in 5:18: full equality with God. If one believes that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, one cannot help but worship Him in the manner of Thomas: "My Lord and my God."

1 John 5:20, 21

οὗτος ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς καὶ εὐθὸς αὐθὸς yields "This is the true God and eternal life." Scholars in general sustain two different opinions about who is referred to as true God by the demonstrative pronoun οὗτος in this passage. It is either "the true One," namely the Father, referred to twice in this verse, or "Jesus Christ," immediately preceding the demonstrative. C. H. Dodd adds a third view claiming that οὗτος carries broader reference and sums

1Abbott understands the faith of Thomas expressed by his confession as a model to the church, not on the basis of his own words but on those of Jesus' approbation to his words. "Thomas' words here, then, are to be read in the light of Christ's words in chaps. 13-17; the disciple accepts in a single sentence Christ's teaching respecting himself as the one sent from and manifesting to the world the eternal Father. It is the answer of a suddenly awakened faith to the before ill-comprehended declaration, He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (p. 234).

The contrast in vs. 29 is not between seeing and non-seeing but between seeing and believing, and non-seeing and believing. Jesus would be saying to Thomas: "You have been brought to this ideal faith because you have seen me. Blessed are those who, not seeing me, reach this same kind of faith." To C. H. Dodd this beatitude is a rewriting of that which is registered in the Synoptics: "Blessed are the eyes which see what you see!" (Luke 10:23). Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), p. 354. R. E. Brown says: "Those who do not see are equal in God's estimation with those who did see and are ever, in a certain way, nobler. . . . Jesus praises the majority of the people of the new covenant who, though they have not seen him, through the Spirit proclaim him as Lord and God" (Brown, John XIII-XXI, pp. 1049, 1048). Cf. 1 Pet 1:18.
up everything that was said about God in the epistle. Of course, Jehovah's Witnesses defend the first view, i.e., that Jehovah himself is referred to as the true God. We think that the reference is made to Jesus Christ for the following reasons:

1. A natural interpretation of this passage requires that Jesus be the One here, "the true God," since grammatically "this" points to the nearest antecedent. R. Bultmann clearly recognizes this fact by affirming that in the position after the phrase "in his Son Jesus Christ" οὐκός "cannot refer to God, but only to Jesus Christ." That "Jesus Christ" cannot be considered as a gloss is evident from "the well-attested Johannine pattern of sequential phrases referring to Father and Son."

2. The reference to the Father here is tautological, namely, it would be "unmeaning repetition." The Father is mentioned twice previously as "the true One." It does not make good sense to say, "the true One" is "the true God" or "the true God" is "the true One."

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1See C. H. Dodd, The Johannine Epistles (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1953), p. 140. Against Dodd's view stands the fact that the pronoun is not neuter but masculine.


3In 2 John 7 the whole preceding clause, "men who will not acknowledge the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh" is referred by οὐκός. The same is true in 1 John 2:22. Such men incorporate the spirit of the antichrist, or, as Westcott says, "the general description is individualized." The Epistles of John (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955), p. 229. Therefore the singular form is used.


6Liddon, p. 242.
This would be redundant. It is rather more logical to consider that the author adds here a further element indispensable to his reasoning.

3. Although the Father is called the true God in John 17:3, it is not amazing that Jesus here is referred to as God since in Johannine writings Jesus is explicitly so called (John 1:1; 20:28). Furthermore Jesus is presented as the personification of truth in John 14:6. It is difficult to see why he should not be designated as "the true God."^1

4. The identifying predicate of ο̂στός is double: "the true God" and "eternal life." This expression, as Brown observes, "fits Jesus better than it fits God."^2 Although the Father "has life in Himself" (John 5:26), "life" is predicate linked more to the Son (John 11:25; 14:6, 1:4). A few verses earlier it was stated that "He who has the Son has life" but "He who has not the Son of God has not life" (vs. 12), and in the prologue of the epistle the author identifies Jesus with eternal life: "The eternal life was with the Father and was made manifest to us" (1:2; see also John 1:1, 2, and 14).

5. The reference to Jesus here is more in harmony with the Johannine structure of this epistle. E. Malatesta sees in 5:20 "the author's most profound Christological statement,"^3 which he

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^1 R. E. Brown thinks of 1 John 5:20 as "almost a rearrangement of John 17:3" (Epistles, p. 640).

^2 Ibid., p. 626. Brown understands that "eternal life," since anarthrous, is to be joined to the first predicate resulting in "the true God who is (for us) eternal life."

has already enunciated in his prologue—although not so explicitly (1:1-4). Notice that the prologue concludes with "fellowship with the Father and with the Son," which is implied in 5:20. The parallel with the gospel, where the most important statements about Jesus are placed at the outset and more definitively at the end, is obvious.

The fact that both the Gospel of John (20:28) and 1 John end by confessing Jesus as God shows how important this was in Johannine thought—and not simply in an abstract way, for in each case the confession of Jesus as God is followed by a mention of the (eternal) life that such belief brings to his followers.¹

6. Finally, the reference to Jesus is more in harmony with the logic of the context and with the argument developed in 5:20: "We are in him who is true" by our being "in his Son Jesus Christ." Why is this possible? Because Jesus "is the true God and eternal life." R. Schnackenburg argues persuasively in this direction and concludes that "the second sentence of 5:20 has meaning only if it refers to Jesus."² I. H. Marshall affirms that "It is precisely because Jesus is the true God that the person who is in Him is also in the Father."³

²Cited by Brown, Jesus, p. 19.
So, once more the full deity of Jesus can hardly be denied. F. F. Bruce remarks that "so fully is the Father expressed in His Son that what is predicated of the former can be predicated of the latter: 'what God was the Word was' (John 1:1, NEB). Our Lord is rightly acclaimed as 'true God of true God'."^1

**Christology and Soteriology in 1 John 5:20**

Seen in this way, 1 John 5:20 is one of the texts in Scripture that establishes most clearly and directly the close relationship between the deity of Jesus and his work of salvation. "Eternal life" in John stands for "salvation" in other NT writings. Such a salvation is an experience that can be enjoyed now and here;² it also has future implications (John 5:24). It is exclusively a gift of God. Man receives it from God through Jesus Christ by believing in him (3:16; 20:31).

The basic sense of the Greek αἰώνιος (eternal), employed twenty-three times in the Gospel and first epistle of John, is "pertaining to an age," since αἰών can indicate merely a segment of time, an age.³ Time was divided by the Jews in "present age" and "age to come." Because the latter was considered in terms of eternity (αἰών), the adjective αἰώνιος was used to identify the

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²Therefore the use of the present tense in verbs which express the act of receiving salvation, as in John 3:36; 5:24; 6:47; 1 John 5:12, is perfectly understandable.

life in that age. So eternal life is the life proper to the age to come. John, like the other writers of the NT, presupposes that the age to come has arrived in the ministry, death and exaltation of Jesus and that eternal life can be received by every believer.

But the point in John is that eternal life is identified as knowing the Father and "Jesus Christ sent by Him" (17:3). This fact is developed in 1 John 5:20 where four steps are established:

1. The Son of God has come (incarnation) in order to give us the knowledge of the Father, namely, eternal life or salvation.

2. Such a knowledge, or salvation, is not a mere intellectual apprehension but living fellowship with God--"we are in him who is true."

3. This fellowship with God is not merely through Jesus Christ but through our fellowship with Jesus Christ. "We are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ." Liddon says, "Our being in the true God depends upon our being in Christ." Bultmann demonstrates that the phrase "In his Son Jesus Christ" cannot stand in opposition to "in the true one," but it has an explanatory character--"by virtue of the fact that (or insofar as) we are in his Son Jesus Christ." 4

4. Finally John provides the rationale for his argument. Being in Jesus we are in fact in him who is true (the Father) because Jesus himself is the true God. The knowledge of the Father through

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1See Morris, p. 227.

2The Synoptics speak in terms of entrance into the Kingdom of God, and Paul emphasizes the eschatological salvation now made manifested.

3Liddon, p. 242.

4Bultmann, pp. 89, 90.
the Son is eternal life because Jesus himself is also eternal life.¹

**Christ's Two Natures in 1 John 5:20**

We can observe that John here begins by establishing the human nature of Jesus by referring to the incarnation—"the Son of God has come," and ends by stating his full divine nature.² As was noted in chapter 2, salvation is founded upon the divine and human natures of Jesus Christ. W. Douglas Mackenzie says: "If He was not God, then God is still unknown; if He was not man, then human nature has not yet been perfected even in one instance, and human sin has not been done to death by that one on behalf of all."³ Athanasius in his anti-Arian argumentation stated: "Jesus whom I know as my Redeemer cannot be less than God."⁴ But his humanity was likewise necessary for our salvation. The Word who was with God and was God had to become flesh and dwell among us to reveal God to us, and to lift us to him. Irenaeus said: "The Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ . . . through His transcendent love became what we are, that He might bring us to be even what He is Himself."⁵ Because he is one of us we can be in him, and because he is God

¹Of course John is not identifying the Father with Jesus. He "does not say that 'this is the Father', but 'this is the true God'" (Liddon, p. 242). Therefore he does not state that Father and Son are the same being, but hints that the Son shares the divine essence of the Father.

²Throughout the epistle the theme of incarnation has been presented mainly in apologetical terms against docetic heresies (2:18-23; 4:1-3; 5:6-8; cf. 2 John 7).

³Mackenzie, p. 104. ⁴Quoted by Hoekema, p. 344.

essentially as the Father is, we can be in God by being in him (see fig. 1). B. F. Westcott says: "So far as Christians are united with Christ, they are united with God. His assumption of humanity (Jesus Christ) explains how the union is possible."

Fig. 1. We are in God by being in his Son, Jesus Christ.

The Deity of Jesus—Our Guarantee of Eternal Life

Therefore, Jesus, as God and man, paid our penalty of sin, the eternal death in a conclusive way. As man, he died even the eternal death, but as true God and eternal life he could rise from the eternal death as the first fruits and guarantee our own resurrection. We must insist that this is possible only because he is the "true God" and "the eternal life." R. S. Candlish puts it well when he states:

1 Westcott, Epistles, p. 196.

2 So, it is imperative that the same Jesus who was crucified and buried be the same that was raised. His resurrection is the greatest evidence that his death destroyed the power of death. His resurrection was the first fruits of his own victorious death. As such, his resurrection is a demonstration of his deity. Jehovah's Witnesses' distinct view of the resurrection is but a reflex of their denial of the full deity of Jesus. Because Jesus is simply "a god" he had no part in raising himself from the dead. This action was exclusively of the Father (Aid, p. 1395). However only two passages in the Gospel of John are sufficient to contradict the idea that he did not partake in the performance of his own resurrection: 10:18, and especially 2:19: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." He talked about the temple of his body in the context of his own resurrection (vss. 21, 22).
It is his being "the true God" that alone can make that eternal death terminable in his case, which cannot be in ours. His becoming our eternal death for us must involve him in its terrible endlessness, but for his being still in himself "the true God," and such "the eternal life." We cannot die the eternal death and yet live; but he can; because he is "the true God and the eternal life." Therefore he says: "I am he that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore"; and again he says: "Because I live ye shall live also."^{1}

Eternal death is the ultimate consequence of sin which separates us from God, the source of live. Indeed, eternal death comes upon the sinner just because he is separated from God. Eternal death is itself firstly ignorance of and separation from God. That is why John characterizes eternal life as knowledge of God and defines such a knowledge in terms of fellowship with him.\(^2\) The secret for "eternal life" is to know God and be in him. Now we are told that this experience is possible only by knowing Jesus and being in him. We cannot know God and be in him apart from knowing Jesus and being in him.

Therefore, even though a religion has to do with the true God, it is not true Christian religion if it has not Jesus or has only a partial Jesus as a mere historical figure or as the Messiah or King of God, but not as the "true God and eternal life." It is the fact that Jesus is "the true God and eternal life" that makes possible and real our knowing God and being in him through knowing Jesus and being in him. He states explicitly: "Unless you believe who I am, you will die in your sins" (John 8:24, Moffat).

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^{2}In John, eternal life consists "not in any mere existence whether here or hereafter. Its essence lies in the experience of fellowship with God. Quality, not duration, is the predominant thought of life in this Gospel." W. H. Griffith Thomas, "The Purpose of the Fourth Gospel," Bibliotheca Sacra 125 (July-Sept. 1968): 261. Regarding the qualitative sense of αἰώνιος see above p. 33, n. 3.
Were we in Jesus, no matter how Jesus were to God, there would be yet an insurmountable abyss between God and us, were not Jesus the true God. That is why the Gospel of John, which defines so adequately what eternal life is, presents Jesus as the Son of God as the one who is in the bosom of the Father and is God himself. A Jesus less than this cannot be our Savior, namely, cannot be the way to the Father, the manner by which we are reintegrated to God.

We must understand that to be in Jesus and to be in God are not only two distinct but mutually incompatible experiences if Jesus is not one with God and the true God. In this case, Jesus, by presenting his divine claims and his invitation to be in him and to dedicate to him all of our selves, in such an absorbing and exclusive way that he becomes "all in all" and to the point that it leaves no room for one else,¹ would be the greatest hindrance to the accomplishment of the very plan of salvation, preventing the work of God from having the human beings back to himself. Jesus would be a rival of God rather than his instrument of restoration of a fellowship deteriorated because of sin. R. S. Candlish states:

It is not needful here to suppose that it is an enemy of God in whom I thus am, and with whom I am thus identified. The case is better put when he is supposed to be a friend of God. For then I look to him to deal with God for me. I am in him as being his; so thoroughly his, that I have nothing of my own; I myself am not my own. He has made me part and parcel of his own very self. It belongs to him to make terms with God for himself; and for me as being in him. He has to do with God; not I. So it must be with me, if he in whom I am is not "the true God and the eternal life"; if he and the true One are separate and distinct; if he and the Father are not one. The higher he is, the nearer he is to God, the more does my "being in him" supersede and supplant my "being in God."²

¹This can be inferred from passages such as Matt 10:37-39; 16:24, 25; 19:27-29; Luke 14:26, 27.
²Candlish, pp. 575, 576.
Ratzinger remarks that:

His mediation would indeed basically cancel itself out and become a separation instead of a mediation if he were someone other than God, if he were an intermediate being. He would then be guiding us not towards God but away from him. It thus turns out that as mediator he is God himself and "man himself"—both with equal reality and totality.1

So, Jesus' humanity is indispensable and his divinity is supremely necessary. "Only if he was really a man like us can he be our mediator, and only if he is really God, like God, does the mediation reach its goal."2

Thus understood, it is easy to see how the rigid monotheism of any form of unitarianism cannot really offer a solution for the problem of separation of God and man caused by sin. We are not able to deal with God himself, except through Jesus Christ (John 1:18; 14:6). The absolute monotheism makes God "a sort of constitutional monarch; faith deals not with him but only with his ministers."3 This is not only insufficient for salvation; it hinders our salvation.

Since Christ is truly God and man our being in him and his being in us binds us to God; by this fact we are saved. The process of restoration of fellowship, broken off by sin, is fully completed (John 17:11, 22, 23). With good reason E. G. White says: "The divinity of Christ is the believer's assurance of eternal life."4

Therefore, none can affirm that he has an experience of fellowship with Jesus and another with the Father, as if these were two fellowships. Nor can one enjoy fellowship with the Father

1Ratzinger, p. 115. 2Ibid., p. 117.
3Ibid., p. 119. 4White, Desire of Ages, p. 530.
without fellowship with the Son. There is no fellowship with the Father except through fellowship with the Son. "We cannot think of ourselves as in touch with the One without being at the same time in touch with the other."¹ This means that Jesus is not left behind as soon as one's fellowship with the Father becomes a reality through the fellowship with the Son, as if his role had been played out and his work is done. No, fellowship with the Father can be maintained only when fellowship with the Son is cultivated as a living experience. One's fellowship with the Father is an enduring experience only as "he constantly places himself in such contact with the historic Figure that God can through Him renew the experience."² "Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

¹Coffin, p. 108. ²Ibid., p. 107.

Candlish sees a perfect theological and moral relationship between vss. 20 and 21 of 1 John 5. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols" is seen as the natural appeal of the author of the epistle after that which he has stated previously. An idol is anything that can stand between us and God, or that takes the place due to God in our lives. The best way to keep ourselves from idols is to be in Jesus. "Your warmest love to him, your most familiar intercourse with him, your most affectionate clinging to him, your most tender and trusting..."
embrace of him, never can be idolatry; for he is 'the true God and
the eternal life'.”

Idols can also be

Attempts to give actual form and substance, true and living
embodiment and realization, as it were, to men's conception of
deity; those conceptions which otherwise are apt to be so
indistinct, indefinite, misty, shadowy, as to be for the most
part practically all but uninformative. They bring what is
divine within the range and grasp of humanity. The abstract
becomes personal; the ideal becomes real. The infinite takes
the clear and sharp outline of a form or a face that can be
pictured to the mind's eyes at least, if not to that of the
body.2

In this case, Jesus is the only real, living, and complete repre-
sentation of God, the one who is the very stamp of his being. So,
only in Jesus we can know the "true One." Even the highest angel
does not have such a capacity of revealing God. If an angel had
come to earth instead of Jesus, he would have said:

—you may listen to my voice. . . . You may hear what I
have to tell you about God. I will do my best to set him
before you as a reality, in as lifelike a representation as I
can give. But beware of fixing your eyes too much, if indeed
at all, on me. You may imagine that I am so like him, as
living so near him and seeing so much of him, that when you
have formed a clear notion of me you really know him. But it
is not so; it is far otherwise. Your very knowledge of me may
mislead you as to him; tempting you to form inadequate, if not
erroneous, conceptions of him; to enshrine him in my frame and
clothe him in my vesture; the frame and vesture of a mere
creature at the best.3

Had a mere angel come to this world in place of Jesus, he
would have to act and express himself in this way to maintain his
moral integrity before God and man. If he had acted or spoken as
Jesus did, he would surely have sinned by seizing the prerogatives
of God. He would have become a second Satan. But it was not so
with Jesus who is the "true God."

1Candlish, p. 573.  2Ibid., p. 570.  3Ibid., p. 574.
"Keep yourselves from idols" has its raison d'être in the very fact that an idol can be substituted for Christ, the only way to God's knowledge and to eternal life. That is why an idol is so abominable to God. "To whom will you liken me and make me equal, and compare me, that we may be alike? . . . For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning" (Isa 46:5, 9, 10). Only One could exhibit equality with God, he who said: "He who has seen me has seen the Father" (John 14:9).

"Idols," therefore, in the context of 1 John, which registers no previous reference to the danger of idolatry, are to be considered as the false ideas about the Father and the Son which were pressing the believers to deviate from the true faith. Although such ideas were presented by the masters who held them as Christian concepts of God, they were in fact anti-Christian concepts, since they

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That John has this Isaian passage as a background of his portrait of Jesus as the image of God, can be deduced through such passages as 13:19: "I tell you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he." The "I am" sayings form a part of this portrait. Jehovah in OT times is presented as I am related with two major events: the Exodus (Exod 3:14) and the return from the Babylonic Exile (Isa 41:4; 44:6; 46:9, 10; 48:12). In both occasions the contrast between the true God and the false ones was established. These two events are appropriate types of the final deliverance from sin through Jesus Christ. See Irwin W. Reist, "The Theological Significance of the Exodus," Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society 12 (Fall 1969):230. The God who delivers man from the bondage of sin and death is the same that in the past has delivered his people from other and lesser kind of bondage. That is why Jesus applied to himself the name "I am." "The name is no longer merely a word but a person: Jesus himself. . . . In him is fulfilled what a mere name could never in the end fulfil. In him the meaning of the discussion of the name of God has reached its goal. . . . In him God has entered for ever into co-existence with us. The name is no longer just a word at which we clutch, it is now flesh of our flesh, bone of our bone. God is one of us" (Ratzinger, p. 91, 92).
denied God's self-revelation in Christ. This warning is as precious for us today as it was to the church at the end of the first century.

J. M. Boice observes:

[Any] profession must be tested by the basic doctrines of apostolic Christianity. What does the one speaking really believe about Jesus? Is He God incarnate or just a teacher? Did He die a real, atoning, vicarious death for sinners? Or is His death merely exemplary? Did He rise from the dead? Is the teaching of Jesus true, complete and authoritative? Or is His teaching partial, thereby needing the teaching of others to bring us to a higher and indeed needed form of "Christianity"? According to John's book, and indeed to the entire Word of God, anything that detracts from Christ is idolatrous, for He is the true God, the true revelation of the Father, the true atonement for sin, the true bread, the true vine. He is the beginning and the end of all true religion.¹

Conclusion

What this chapter has examined leads us to the conclusion that Christ as God and man is really the only access to the Father. Jehovah's Witnesses, perhaps unconsciously, block this access when they deny the full deity of Christ. The very name adopted to identify their movement becomes in this way an impropriety: they simply cannot be Jehovah's Witnesses when they are not real witnesses of Jesus.

To a people who professed to be witnesses of God but who did not acknowledge the deity of his Son, the Scripture said: "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you" (Rom 2:24). The people whom Paul addressed could not give a correct witness about God because they rejected the One sent from God. Indeed in the strictest sense of the word, the only Jehovah's Witness who

lived on this world, was Jesus Christ himself, he who, alone, saw the Father, and made him known. Therefore, it is through him that the witnessing of God becomes possible. Those who in OT times testified of Jehovah were Christ's witnesses (see Acts 10:43; cf. 1 Pet 1:10-12).

To replace ethnical Israel, another people was called to the work of witnessing, the church, the new Israel. To them Christ says: "You shall be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8). The privilege of witnessing of Jesus is given to the church because it knows him who redeemed it; it has experienced, through the new birth, the death and resurrection of Christ; it has him as its Savior and Lord and through him it has access "in one Spirit to the Father" (Eph 2:18). By knowing the Son it also knows the Father. Only thus can it be both witness of Jesus and of God.

In effect the Bible says: "No one who denies the Son has the Father. He who confesses the Son has the Father also" (1 John 2:23).

\begin{footnote}
Rev 17:6 speaks explicitly of the "witnesses of Jesus." The context of Acts 1:8 implies especially the witness of Jesus' bodily resurrection, which Jehovah's Witnesses deny.
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Cf. 1 John 5:9-12.
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CHAPTER V

JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES—A PEOPLE WAITING FOR

SALVATION: THE EVANGELISTICAL CHALLENGE

We have observed that Jesus Christ himself constitutes the
final criterion to determine whether a religious group is genuinely
Christian. The Biblical data present him as truly God and truly
man, One who offered his immaculate life as an atoning and vicarious
sacrifice of infinite value for salvation of every human being. He
was raised from the dead as a result of his own triumph over sin
and death. For ever he is bound to us, for his resurrection did
not dispoil him of his human nature. Neither did his incarnation
hinder him from continuing to be God. Since he is essentially and
substantially equal with the Father through his divine nature, and
one with us through his human nature, we can enjoy in him a perfect
fellowship with God.

Such a fellowship is understood in terms of salvation as
a present, continuous, and future experience. The faith by which
this experience becomes possible reaches its climax when, like
Thomas, the surrendered soul recognizes Christ as his God and Lord.
Therefore, to be Christian is not simply a matter of terminology;
it defines a correct relationship to Christ. A religion which is
Christian exalts Christ before the world and motivates its members
to an unconditional commitment unto him.
A Non-Christian Group

It is now fully evident that Jehovah's Witnesses cannot be considered Christian according to the Biblical premises discussed in this project. How could they if Christ first as a mere angel, then as a mere man, and presently again as a mere angel is so believed and announced in their books and magazines and through their door-to-door ministry every day? How could they be if the reality of incarnation, of the atoning sacrifice, and of the true resurrection of Jesus is categorically denied? How could they be Christian if the gracious salvation of God provided on the basis of the person and work of his Son and received on the basis of sola fide is replaced by a salvation-attaining system of human effort and merit? We can only say of them what was said of the Jews in the past: "They have stumbled over the stumbling stone" (Rom 9:32), Christ.

In effect Bruce M. Metzger states:

Today as of old, a proper response to the primary question, "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he?" (Matt 22:42), constitutes a veritable touchstone of historic Christianity. Certain other aberrations in Biblical understanding may doubtless be tolerated if one is, so to speak, turned in the right direction with regard to Christology. But if a sect's basic orientation toward Jesus Christ be erroneous, it must be seriously doubted whether the name "Christian" can rightly be applied to such system.¹

Such a religious system with a "message centered in the Jehovah of the Old Testament and not the Christ of the New Testament,"² with their own method of Biblical interpretation and peculiar concepts

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²Gruss, Apostles, p. 56.
of messianism, soteriology, and eschatology, their exclusivist denominationalism and theocratic administration, certainly is closer to Judaism than Christianity. Walter E. Stuermann concurs with this view:

Almost everywhere they subordinate Christian and New Testament themes to those of Judaism and the Old Testament. One wonders sometimes whether Jehovah might not just as well dispense with his chief executive officer, Jesus Christ. They will, of course, vigorously deny it; but, in this writer's judgment, the Witnesses are more accurately considered a mutation of a conservative, apocalyptic Judaism rather than a variant of Christianity.1

Regarding the Watchtower position W. M. Smith remarks:

This modern cult, in taking the title of Jehovah's Witnesses, thus identifies itself with a pre-Christian revelation given to Israel, and in so doing it ignores and in fact repudiates all the New Testament passages relating to this matter of witnessing. Because of this fact, we shall not be surprised to find that its literature denies the Godhead of Christ. Its adherents do not preach a gospel of redemption through Christ's precious blood, and they do not witness to the resurrection of Christ, because they do not believe that he rose from the dead. As a corollary, the emphasis of Jehovah's Witnesses is on an earthly kingdom, their many places of worship being called Kingdom Hall. It is not wrong to believe in a final earthly Messianic Kingdom. But since the advent, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ this is not the basic message for the redeemed.2

Therefore, it is difficult to disagree with E. C. Gruss that Jehovah's Witnesses are "as lost as anyone else who rejects Christ."3 This fact should be sufficient to convince us that it is our duty not to ignore them in Seventh-day Adventist plans of evangelism. Beyond this, however, there are yet many thousands all over the world who every day, through the importunate and persistent process of

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1Stuermann, p. 345.
3Gruss, Apostles, p. 254.
Watchtower indoctrination, are little by little closing their hearts to the true message of God. Christ's church cannot passively stand by in the face of this evangelistic challenge such as the one offered by Jehovah's Witnesses. They need to know Jesus as their personal Savior, and precisely because of this need they must be evangelized.

The need for evangelizing Jehovah's Witnesses having been established, the remainder of this project suggests ways and means of achieving such a goal. First, this chapter describes a way of reaching Jehovah's Witnesses and appealing to them to consider Jesus as Lord and Savior. Second, it studies the operation of the Holy Spirit in convincing and converting. Finally, it considers how to carry out a debate with Jehovah's Witnesses, should that prove necessary.

**Evangelizing Jehovah's Witnesses**

Frequently it appears that pastors and church members feel it is too difficult to evangelize Jehovah's Witnesses. Indeed, this is often true. Jehovah's Witnesses do not agree to receive Bible instruction except from the Watchtower. The reason is very simple: Jehovah's Witnesses are entirely sure that their religious movement is the only way of salvation and the Watchtower is the only guardian of God's truth. William Cetnar, an ex-Witness, states that Jehovah's Witnesses are characterized by a belief in two basic principles: "1. The Bible is God's book, inspired and to be obeyed, and 2. Bethel, the Watchtower Society at 124 Columbia Heights, Brooklyn, New York, is God's visible theocratic organization; whatever word
comes from Watchtower is equal to Scripture."¹ We are told that the Watchtower Society is "the instrument or channel being used by Jehovah to teach his people on earth."² Through this Society the Witnesses believe they have all they need in the matter of Biblical knowledge.

No wonder, then, that the Biblical interpretation developed in the Watchtower publications is accepted without question or contest. If one refers to the visible contradictions and inconsistencies of their doctrines, Jehovah's Witnesses cite Prov 4:18 and affirm that the knowledge of the truth is progressive. If a Biblical passage opposing their beliefs is presented, they simply respond that they will contact the Society about the matter. "It will provide the correct interpretation," they say. The last word always belongs to the Watchtower.

This does not mean, however, that Jehovah's Witnesses are unreachable through evangelism. Experiences of conversion among them demonstrate that they do not constitute a hopeless case. However, their blind confidence in their religion is certainly an indication that the best way to approach them is not through argumentation. Experience reveals that with Jehovah's Witnesses argument stirs up argument. They are trained to face argument with argument. To talk to their minds or to appeal to their good sense nearly always is of little or perhaps no profit at all. The process of indoctrination to which they have been subjected was in reality


a type of brainwashing which has made them nearly immune to onsets that might jeopardize their confidence in the Watchtower movement. What is worse, such brainwashing is carried on week by week in the meetings at the Kingdom Halls where the teachings of the Society are driven into the minds of the adherents to such an extent that they cease to hold any sound views of their own on major issues. Their views are those of the leaders of whom they have become followers.¹

Rather than appealing to the mind, it is most appropriate to approach Jehovah's Witnesses by trying to reach their hearts. Nobody is a casual Jehovah's Witnesses. As the studies by Eddy and Martin have demonstrated, Jehovah's Witnesses are sincere in their religion and believe that they constitute God's people in these last days.² Nevertheless another point is also true: they do not have assurance of their own salvation. As noted in chapter 3, they believe what God has done is not enough. They must prove themselves worthy of salvation. From now till Armageddon and thence-forth till the end of the millennium they suppose they must do their best and hope to be finally saved. Indeed it is the fear of future destruction that keeps Jehovah's Witnesses in bondage to the Watchtower organization. Any inner longing for the genuine salvation


found only in the Gospel of Jesus Christ is repressed by the belief that only the Watchtower Society and its followers will survive Armageddon. Ex-Witness, Toni J. Meneses, of Kent, Washington, said: "I hated every minute, every hour of being a Witness. But I thought it was the only way to survive Armageddon and live on paradise earth."¹

Witnesses are not sure of their own salvation and it is just this lack of assurance that may offer a crack for the Gospel to enter. We must keep in mind, however, that under normal circumstances this is not a real problem for them. They sincerely believe that nobody can have assurance of salvation. They also believe that they are in the right path being Jehovah's Witnesses and striving to be at last saved. In other words, lack of assurance of salvation does not mean at all a lack of confidence in their movement. Insecurity of salvation becomes a real problem for them only when they feel² that: (1) Salvation because of Jesus' expiatory sacrifice is a free gift of God to be fully enjoyed in the future, it is true, but which can and must be possessed now through genuine faith in the Gospel; (2) Salvation is a free gift because it cannot be achieved through human effort and merit, for "no human being will be justified in his [God's] sight by works of the law" (Rom 3:20); and (3) If they continue their regime of human works they


²We made use of the verb to feel rather than to understand in order to stress our conviction that only through the operation of God in their hearts Jehovah's Witnesses will be able to arrive at the threefold conclusion we give next.
not only continue unsure of their salvation, but at last will have no salvation at all.

At this point they are able not only to make a decision for Jesus, accepting the content of the kerygma, but they have an open heart toward his didachê for a correct understanding of the Biblical teaching. The reason is obvious: since salvation is by grace alone through faith, the Watchtower Society cannot be the true channel of Jehovah's truth on earth for it leads human beings astray from the true to a false system of salvation based in human works.

Therefore, we suggest an evangelical approach which aims for the heart rather than the mind or reason as the appropriate way to contact Jehovah's Witnesses and try to move them from their error to a genuine experience in God's salvation.

**Contacting Jehovah's Witnesses**

It is not necessary to seek out Jehovah's Witnesses to contact them. Sooner or later they will knock at your door. Then you will have the opportunity to contact them in your own home.

What should you do when Jehovah's Witnesses come to your door? First we consider what you should not do and why.

1. Do not slam the door in their face or address them with harsh words. The persons who come to your door urgently need your spiritual help, although they do not know that. They need the Gospel in their lives for their salvation. Could you dare to send them away as empty as when they knocked? Furthermore, Jehovah's Witnesses are dominated by a persecution complex due to their understanding that they are God's people. A hostile attitude toward them only encourages them in their error.
2. Do not express any negative comment about the work they are doing. Such remarks as "How can you intelligent people do this kind of work?" and the like do more harm than good. Witnesses do not recognize your words as sufficiently authoritative to permit themselves to be influenced by them. On the contrary, antagonism is enhanced. Do not address them with taunting and mocking expressions. Never, by being discourteous, become a stumbling block in the path of Jehovah's Witnesses who need Christ.

3. Do not lose your temper under any circumstances. This exhibits a defeatist attitude, for anger means frustration. Be patient. Lack of emotional control only puts you at a disadvantage to help them. They would leave with the impression that your religion does not even have the power to refine your behavior. It would only be another way to confirm them in their error.

4. Do not enter into a discussion with Jehovah's Witnesses, especially as you make the first contact with them. Discussion may be necessary later; but not at first. Jehovah's Witnesses are instructed to spend no more than a few minutes in their contact when they visit a house for the first time. Generally they follow this instruction since they have a certain number of visits to pay and a report which they must render to the leadership of the kingdom hall where they are members. Therefore they are not concerned at this time with any doctrinal polemics. Even if they were, this would not be the best way to approach them. Remember, you should speak to their hearts rather than to their minds. In any case, if they go on, they simply move to the next door and you lose an excellent opportunity of witnessing Jesus to them.
On the positive side, we offer some suggestions as to what you should do:

1. Receive Jehovah's Witnesses with a prayerful attitude. You must pray silently for the direction of God and place yourself in the hands of the Holy Spirit to be used as his instrument in bringing the spiritual help your visitors need. Ask the heavenly power to reach their hearts with the Gospel. Pray for wisdom and tact to deal with them. Pray also for them that God may touch their hearts and move them from their error. (In fact, if you feel a burden for the salvation of Jehovah's Witnesses, you will be impelled onto your knees every day in intercessory prayer on their behalf.) It is not advisable to pray with Witnesses at the beginning of their visit for they are not allowed to pray with "unbelievers." However, if at the end of their visit you feel motivated to invite them for a prayer, pray briefly and touchingly, addressing God as Jehovah, exalting Jesus as our Savior and Lord, and pleading in behalf of your visitors. Do not be concerned if they do not also pray. Naturally, the reaction to this prayer is dependent upon the way the contact was developed.

2. Let the Witnesses talk. Respectfully and courteously listen to what the Witnesses have to present. Generally they begin by offering some kind of literature for sale, probably the last issue of *Awake!* or *The Watchtower*. While you listen you have time to pray and to control any sort of emotion naturally aroused in this kind of encounter. Do not interrupt them. Doubtless they will approach first some subject of general interest published by the magazine and then continue with a subject of religious character such as the
present situation of the world and the kingdom of God. Certainly they will ask you leading questions, to know better your thought and philosophy of life. Do not answer such questions explicitly. Try to keep them under suspense about who you are and what you think or believe. The element of surprise helps you to receive more attention from them when you do talk. Their presentation closes with the invitation to you to buy the literature. This is the most crucial element of the contact, namely, what you should say to them.

3. Try to talk to their hearts. Perhaps the means of this is to approach their real need, not the message they have just presented to you. Forget what they have said. You know who they are, what they think of Jesus and salvation, and how they relate to him. They do not believe the true message of salvation, and consequently, they are lost. So present Jesus to them. This does not mean you should discuss Christology with them; this would cause you to enter into controversy with them. Talk about Jesus as your personal Savior. Do as Paul did when he was in Corinth and decided to know nothing among the people there "except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor 2:2). You can begin by expressing your appreciation for their coming to your home. Perhaps you can say: "I am very happy for your coming to my home today. Certainly you came as a response to my prayer this morning. I asked our heavenly Father [or Jehovah, if you prefer] to help me to be a blessing today to someone by sharing every thing he has done in my behalf through Jesus Chirst, his beloved Son."[1] Talk about what

[1]If you use this introduction you must have really prayed
Jesus means to you, what he has done in your life. Tell them briefly but enthusiastically and in sweet terms your experience of conversion, \(^1\) what you were before, and about the happiness you enjoy now by believing in Jesus. Convey the assurance of salvation you found in him. R. Fisher advises: "Give a positive testimony of your salvation as you would with anyone else, only adapting it as much as possible in light of what you know about Jehovah's Witnesses."\(^2\)

Commenting on the value of personal testimony shared with Jehovah's Witnesses, Pam Pelletier concludes: "When you share the way your 'living hope' has revolutionized your daily life, your testimony may touch the Witness's [sic] suppressed needs."\(^3\)

4. Arrange a second contact. At this point the Witnesses could be worried about their other visits. Remember, they work under the pressure to perform their task within a determined time and try to fulfill their schedule. Do not press them, therefore, to remain in your home when they show a desire to leave. With a worried mind they could not listen to you anyway. Permit the

\(^{1}\)About the convenience of sharing the experience of salvation to Jehovah's Witnesses, Schnell says: "Instead of preaching, you are witnessing for Christ. Instead of becoming wrought up, you become joyful. Your heart sings when it thinks of what Christ Jesus has done for you. Your face radiates a smile. That disarms the Jehovah's Witness." "Witnessing for Christ to Jehovah's Witnesses," United Evangelic Action 19 (July 1960):163.


contact to come to a close. However, assure a second contact with your visitors. How? By acquiring their literature. According to their plan of work, Jehovah's Witnesses must revisit each home where their literature was left. This second visit is known as a "back call" and its objective is to invite the resident to a program of "Bible study" in his home, or somewhere in the neighborhood, and to obtain his consent. Therefore the Witnesses will return for a second visit when more time is available. Thus accept their literature but offer some of your own literature at the same time. Have at hand some pamphlet or paper with a good article about salvation by faith, the grace of God, or the efficacy of Jesus' sacrifice and make an exchange with them. Next, make a deal with them: "I promise I will read your Awake! since you promise you will read this pamphlet. Remember, Jehovah God is the witness of our deal."

Even with their literature left at your home there is the chance that the Witnesses will not come back due to the very testimony you give them. Therefore, it is advisable that you get their names and telephone numbers, and, better yet, their addresses. If the "back call" fails, you can call them or even visit them.

1 Depending on the circumstances, it would be proper, after your testimony, to ask the Witnesses to give their own testimony about Jesus and their enjoyment of his salvation, as Schnell suggests. "Should you succeed in getting the Witness to give you a testimony," he says, "you have gotten him off his track--things are looking up. Walk into this opportunity by sitting down with him and reading two chapters of the Gospel according to John." "When They Come to Your Door," The Lutheran Standard 10 (August 18, 1970):6. If things work this way there is no doubt that we have in their own testimony a good tool to deepen our witnessing at the first contact. Be ready to go as far as you can at this time, but do not force the situation.
Remember: further contacts need to be assured.

After they leave, offer a prayer in their behalf asking that God may make your testimony fruitful and move the Witnesses to read the literature you gave them. Add their names to your prayer list.

5. Be prepared for further contacts. The "back-call" should take place ten to fifteen days after the first visit, or as early as one week later. In any case, you must be prepared for this encounter. Intensify your periods of prayer and reading the Bible. Fulfill your promise. Read the magazine left by the Witnesses. Try to find some soteriological point in it—perhaps a reference to the ransom or the place of faith or repentance for salvation, or similar items—which you can use to introduce the study you wish to present to the Witnesses. This time, plan to study the Bible with them and ask God to open the doors for it. The Witnesses will come intending to get you to decide to receive Bible studies, but it is you who must give a Bible study without asking them whether they want to receive it. You know that normally they do not accept Biblical teaching from a non-Witness, so be "crafty" and catch them (2 Cor 12:16, KJV). The subject to be approached could be the same as that offered in the pamphlet. This means that you must really study the pamphlet with them with the Bible at hand for reading the passages referred to in it. This kind of Bible study is familiar to Jehovah's Witnesses. They were indoctrinated in this way by the Watchtower Society.

If the visit does not take place after fifteen days, contact the Witnesses and make an appointment with them. Follow the same criterion suggested for the "back-call."
The suggested procedure may be as follows: After the initial greeting, state that you read their magazine as you promised. Make a reference to that soteriological point you checked in their magazine as a parallel point with the subject of the pamphlet. Do not, however, make an evaluation of the subject contained in the magazine, for this could result in a polemical dialogue which must not occur. Refer to that particular point only as an introduction to your study. Your reference must be a positive one. This closes the way for polemics, catches their interest, and assures their attention. Say: "I have found such and such a statement on page . . . to be very interesting. Here it is: . . . ."

After some further remarks you may say: "By the way, the subject developed in that pamphlet I gave you has to do precisely with this point, as you certainly observed when you read it." Note that you are not asking them if they read the pamphlet. You are taking this for granted, though there is a great probability that they did not, and you know that. Do not give them time or opportunity to say whether they read the pamphlet or not. Add naturally, "Do you have the pamphlet here with you?" It is almost sure that they do not, therefore, have two more copies at hand to give them at that moment.

The most crucial point of the second contact has arrived. Trust in God and go ahead. Say: "I would like to consider with you some additional details of this tremendously important subject." You can choose between considering the entire article in the pamphlet or only some specific points. Of course, if the article
is too extensive and a thorough reading would take a long time, you should choose the second option. In any case, you must be fully acquainted with the theme in that pamphlet. Ask for the active participation of the Witnesses in the reading of the chosen paragraphs. Ask them to read in the Bible the references contained in the paragraphs. Doubtless they have their NWT with them. If not, provide Bibles for them.

Enrich the theme with your own comments based upon your experiencing of God's salvation. Ask them questions about what is being considered and try to involve them in the subject. Transmit love and light while God's salvation is described. Pay attention and be flexible to the way the Holy Spirit directs things. Believe that he works in the hearts while his Word is considered. Modulate your voice and use more touching terms as the study draws to a close. At the close, make an appeal to their hearts: "Is not the salvation God has provided for us in Jesus marvelous?" At this point the Witnesses will have received a concept of salvation different from the teaching of the Watchtower. Sin will have been revealed for what it really is, God's grace will have been presented as our only sufficiency, and Calvary will have been exalted. A key question involves them personally with these realities: "Are you enjoying this great salvation? Are you saved?" If they are consistent with their faith, they will answer: "We hope to survive

If they interrupt the presentation to ask some questions or to make an objection do not permit that the chain of thought be broken. Say: "This is a good question. I will write it on this piece of paper in order to answer it immediately after our considerations." Possibly when the study is closed the question or objection will have been naturally met.
Armageddon." Your reply should be, "To survive Armageddon is important; however, to be saved from sin is more important yet."

Reemphasize that to be saved from sin is a blessed experience to be enjoyed here and now. Read some passages from the Gospel of John. Invite them to receive Jesus as their personal Savior and to make a commitment to him. Pray with and for them if the Holy Spirit impels you to do so. If, however, you feel their lack of concern, do not be discouraged. Normally it takes a long time for a Jehovah's Witness to be won. You are only at the beginning. Maintain, therefore, your courage and enthusiasm.

After a study such as that outlined above, the Witnesses will be ill at ease about inviting you for a program of Bible study with them, but this might happen unless you take some precautions to prevent it. Do not give them an opportunity to invite you. Immediately after the study is finished, say: "I want to thank you very much for coming this time. I very much appreciate this meeting and I would like to see you again. What about the same day and time next week?" This is a polite indication that for you the meeting is finished while at the same time assuring a third visit. Give the invitation warmly, kindly, but firmly. With the occasion established for the third visit, give the Witnesses another pamphlet. "Please, take this other pamphlet and read it with your Bible in your home. It contains an important subject following the one we considered today." The subject could be about the new birth, a crucial one for Jehovah's Witnesses.

One of three things will probably take place concerning a third contact: (1) the Witnesses will return as agreed at the
end of the second visit; (2) the Witnesses will return accompanied with a third person, someone with more experience and Biblical knowledge, a circuit servant, for example; or (3) the Witnesses will not return again.

If they do not return, you can only contact them and try to establish a meeting in their homes or somewhere. Remember that you took their names and phone numbers at the first visit. If the meeting does not take place and no possibility of further contact is discovered, deliver the problem in God's hand. You did what you could. You gave them the message of the cross. The Gospel seed has been sown and according to his will God may make it bud and bear fruit. You do not know the ways of God's providence, and one day in the future you may have a surprise and learn of their conversion to Christianity. Some time after the last contact, you can, perhaps, mail a letter to them recalling some important points of the study made and inviting them to make a genuine decision for Christ. Keep praying for them.

If the meeting does take place, you can more or less follow the course of the second meeting, considering the subject of the pamphlet. Make sure the meetings go on in the following weeks.

The second alternative is generally inevitable. Sooner or later, if you really solidify a program of Bible studies with Jehovah's Witnesses, you will have to face some superior of the kingdom hall. Therefore, do not be surprised. Be emotionally prepared for such an hour. The presence of the third element has a reason. He may want to test your Biblical knowledge and demonstrate that you have nothing to teach Jehovah's Witnesses. If
this is so, he wants, in fact, "to debunk" you and strengthen the convictions of your original visitors. This may mean a necessary debate. However, if an encounter of this nature becomes really necessary try to keep it from happening now. You have a Bible study to give; proceed, therefore, in this direction. Express your appreciation for the presence of another Witness "in our meeting" and invite him to participate in the study. Provide another copy of the pamphlet for him and follow the criterion of the last study. With all probability the third person will interrupt the presentation, from time to time, by introducing questions or remarks in order to disturb the development of the theme. Be courteous but "hold" the subject to the end. Explain that such and such points deserve careful study which should be made in a later meeting. If he insists upon a controversial issue, there is no other alternative but to establish a date for a debate. Remember that such a debate would be reasonable only for the sake of two prospective converts.¹

If the third meeting takes place as scheduled you have an excellent token that the Witnesses really want to learn more of that which you have already studied with them. Perhaps they read the second pamphlet and have questions about the new birth. If they read carefully they will surely have queries. Follow the process of the former study, employing copies of the pamphlet and Bibles, and give especial attention to the questions. Pray that with this study the walls of the Watchtower may start to weaken.

¹See below our considerations about debate with Jehovah's Witnesses, especially "When Debate is Necessary," pp. 183, 184.
The capital point here is that every human being must be born again in order to enjoy God's salvation in Christ and become able "to see" or understand (to have perception of) the "Kingdom of God" (a key expression for Jehovah's Witnesses), as Jesus told Nicodemus (John 3:3). Remember that for Jehovah's Witnesses only the 144,000 must be born again. This group will certainly be referred to by the Witnesses at some time during the study. You can limit your presentation to the theme of the new birth itself and suggest that at the next meeting the analysis of Christ's church and who composes it will be considered. Then, when this opportunity comes, do not put emphasis upon the identity of the 144,000 due to its controversial character. If the Witnesses insist upon this point, explain that you are not worried about it and have left this aspect entirely to the care of him who "knows those who are his" (2 Tim 2:19).

Following this plan, a process of Bible studies can be developed and solidified, always aiming at the conversion of the Witnesses to Christ. The continuous usage of pamphlets and other materials depends on the circumstances. Remember that Jehovah's Witnesses appreciate Bible study with these helpful tools. The themes must always be developed in a Christocentric, inspiring, and appealing manner. Study the deity of Jesus with them but never polemically. Do it from the redemptive as well as the Christological viewpoint.

1 See Fisher, pp. 232-34, for good insights about new birth, the name of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit as subjects to be studied with Jehovah's Witnesses.
Be patient and permit the Holy Spirit to work. Many weeks may be necessary before they fully accept Jesus as their Savior, Lord, and God, and decide to believe in the Trinity. Then, and only then, should you analyze the major doctrinal themes of the Bible. When they are genuinely converted to the Lord they are also ready to listen and learn about the Sabbath day, tithes, laws of health, and so forth. Even then, however, Christ should occupy the central place in every exposition. Eschatological themes, for example, must be presented within a "Christological scope."

Hans K. LaRondelle says, "Only when what God has to say is related to Him and His over-all plan of redemption in Christ (1 Cor 10:4; Heb 4:2) will the literal-historical sense of the prophetic scriptures be fully recognized."

Biblical themes must be adequately adapted to the Jehovah's Witnesses.

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1 About this point, Ted Dencher says: "After they are saved it will be a lot easier for them to see the fallacy of [their] doctrines, and your task will then be easier. Turn them over to the Holy Spirit and your job will be easier yet." "How Can We Help Jehovah's Witnesses?," Church Herald, July 26, 1974, p. 15.

2 Concerning the teaching about the Sabbath day, for instance, E. G. White affirms: "You should not feel it is your duty to introduce arguments upon the Sabbath question as you meet the people. If persons mention the subject, tell them that this is not your burden now. But when they surrender heart and mind and will to God, they are then prepared candidly to weigh evidence in regard to these solemn, testing truths." Evangelism (Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Pub. Assn., 1946), p. 228. On p. 272 she states further: "Those who seek to correct others should present the attractions of Jesus. They should talk of His love and compassion, present His example and sacrifice, reveal His Spirit. . . . Talk of Christ, and when the heart is converted, everything that is out of harmony with the Word of God will drop off." This is also true in regard to the evangelization of Jehovah's Witnesses.

Witnesses' own doctrinal context. You should have the necessary knowledge of their beliefs to do that. *Our Friends: The Jehovah's Witnesses* series by E. B. Price provides very helpful material.¹

As your relationship with the Witnesses increases you can visit them in their homes. You may know some relatives of theirs, whether Witnesses or not, who could also be evangelized and won to Christ. The moment will come when you will be able to introduce them to other believers and take them to church meetings. However, do not hasten or force this moment. Remember that the secret for evangelistic success is the quiet, gentle action of the Holy Spirit.

**The Work of the Holy Spirit**

"How can one convince Jehovah's Witnesses that they are wrong in regard to salvation and other biblical issues? They seem too steeped in their error to be moved from it," a certain pastor said after some contacts with a Jehovah's Witness. This pastor should not have been so worried about convincing Jehovah's Witnesses of their errors.

To convince is, in fact, one of the most crucial points in any evangelistic approach whether with Jehovah's Witnesses or others. But to convince and convict is not the work of the evangelist but of God. The evangelist must witness, sow the seed of Gospel, and at the most water it, "but only God . . . gives the growth" (1 Cor 2:6, 7). When God convinces generally he converts. Unfortunately, evangelists are sometimes tempted to convince and to thus take the place of God. When one does that his/her efforts are certainly unsatisfactory.

Man has the power to convince people of something; otherwise candidates for public office would not expend thousands of dollars and so much time in political campaigns. In evangelism, both personal and public, man by himself can also be a good persuader. He can use a well-elaborated and structured set of arguments that persuades even the most skillful opponent to change his mind. Yet the evangelist is not able to convert even one person. In the case of Jehovah's Witnesses, it is not enough to convince them of their error, or even to convince them of the truthfulness of the message of Christianity. The mere acceptance and belief in doctrines, no matter how true they are, do not save anyone. The souls we long for are those genuinely converted to the Lord. Only those converted to him can be saved.

Another reason why one should not take upon himself the task of "convincing" Jehovah's Witnesses of their error lies in the fact that one may be led to give excessive attention to self-preparation in the field of argumentation at the cost of the most important concern: personal relationship with God and the experience of his salvation. This salvation experience communicates power to the work of witnessing and leading souls to conversion. An individual full of irrefutable arguments against Jehovah's Witnesses, but without Christ in the heart, does more harm than good. Paul said: "'Knowledge' puffs up, but love builds up" (1 Cor 8:1). Skillfulness, expertise, knowledge, and so forth, in a heart where Christ is absent strengthens human vanity and pride, and these are nothing. Only in Christ can one find his true self-value which is to be measured by service in love. Christ said: "Whoever would be
great among you must be your servant" (Matt 20:26). In fact, it is "the love of Christ" which must "constrain" (2 Cor 5:14, KJV) Jehovah's Witnesses and move them to accept the Gospel. Paul states further: "For the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ" (2 Cor 10:4, 5). A heart full of pride but deprived of Christ can rejoice in winning a debate with Jehovah's Witnesses, but it can hardly partake of the "joy of the Lord," in winning Jehovah's Witnesses and other souls for the Gospel.

We are not discarding here the importance of solid arguments in behalf of the truth. They have their place. Evangelists need to be prepared for any emergency. Paul's advice to Timothy is applicable to every one who engages in the work of salvation of souls: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth" (2 Tim 2:15). The workman and his abilities are to be daily consecrated on God's altar in order that they may be employed by the Holy Spirit in his sacred work. Sitting daily at the feet of Jesus and learning from his love and his humility empties the workman of himself and fills him with power from above.

It is precisely this power—the power of the Holy Spirit—that convinces and converts Jehovah's Witnesses. As we have seen, it is the narrow concept of sin sustained by Jehovah's Witnesses that hinders them from correctly understanding the person and work of Jesus Christ and from adequately evaluating the great salvation
worked out by him on the cross. It is their distorted understanding of sin and of salvation from sin that leads them to a process of human works and achievements for their own salvation. As noted in chapter 1, a distorted perception of spiritual realities results in a human reaction corresponding to such a perception. They need first of all to be awakened to the seriousness and hideousness of sin and to feel that unless they receive Christ as their personal Savior, Lord, and God they are irredeemably lost in spite of all their human efforts to accomplish religious duties and good deeds. "You will surely die in your sins unless you come to believe that I AM" (John 8:24, NAB), Jesus said.

It belongs to the Holy Spirit to bring this truth to their minds, for Jesus taught: "When he [the Holy Spirit] comes, he will convince the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8). It is not the human instrument that leads the sinner to feel his sins and his need for Jesus. This is the work of God. As soon as God's Spirit awakens Jehovah's Witnesses to their desperate condition as sinners before his holiness and justice and to the inefficacy of any religious self-achievement to guarantee salvation to anyone, they will be ready to recognize the "great salvation" which has been provided in Jesus Christ. They will be convinced "concerning the righteousness"—not their own righteousness—"based on law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith" (Phil 3:9), the righteousness "revealed through faith for faith" (Rom 1:17). They will then also be convinced concerning "judgment." The result of the acceptance or non-acceptance of God's free gift will
become plain to them. They may well ask, "How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation?" (Heb 2:3). Between the condi-
tion of sinfulness, about which no human choice is possible, and
the final destiny that lies ahead stands the cross of Christ. Every-
one, including Jehovah's Witnesses, must decide whether to accept
or reject the sacrifice made on that Cross, and that decision will
determine precisely the final destiny.

All of this is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit. Each
person must speak, witness, preach the Gospel, for "faith comes
from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of
Christ" (Rom 10:17), but one must not forget that faith is God's
gift. We must each do our part and entrust to God that which is
his own.

**Debating with Jehovah's Witnesses**

Nothing seems to delight Jehovah's Witnesses more than the
opportunity for a Biblical debate. They are confident they can win,
for they believe they have the monopoly of the truth; everyone else
is wrong, only they are right.

Because of the problems involved in debates with Jehovah's
Witnesses, we consider here some of their debate strategies, when
to debate, and how to undertake debates with Jehovah's Witnesses.

**Jehovah's Witnesses' Strategies in Debate**

Jehovah's Witnesses are experts in managing certain strategies
when in debate. One of these is to permit the opponent to speak as
little as possible. After all they think that they do not come to
a debate to listen, but to speak. Some people have confessed that
they have entered into discussions with Jehovah's Witnesses only
to find that the dialogue became a monologue with the Witnesses
doing all the talking.

Another strategy used by the Witnesses is to make light of
the opponent's reasonings and words. They try to get on the
opponent's nerves by minimizing his arguments, for they know that
as soon as the opponent loses his temper they have won the battle.

Probably the most commonly employed strategy in a debate
is to jump from one text or topic of discussion to another as soon
as they feel they are being beaten on a certain point. They are
quite skillful in switching to another subject every time they feel
their doctrine is being threatened.

Finally, if every strategy fails and the opponent comes off
as the victor in the debate, they employ their last resource and
affirm that the opponent is an open opposer of Jehovah's Kingdom
and message, someone with whom they no longer want to speak. This
indicates that the debate is over, and perhaps in that way the non-
Witness is the winner. However, it does not mean that the Witnesses
themselves have given up and recognized their error. On the con-
trary, they have reaffirmed their position and leave the arena
feeling they have become some sort of martyrs. Indeed when in
debate with Jehovah's Witnesses one has more chance to win the
argument than do the Witnesses themselves.

These and other reasons indicate that we must not engage in
debate with Jehovah's Witnesses merely for the sake of debate.
However there are occasions when debate becomes unavoidable and
necessary.
When Debate Is Necessary

It may be necessary to enter into debate when a regular process of Bible studies with Jehovah's Witnesses has been developed, as considered above, and a superior of the Kingdom Hall decides to accompany them in order to meet certain arguments and keep the Witnesses from studying further. Actually the superior is afraid that the regular contacts already made with the Witnesses may result in the weakening of their confidence in the Watchtower movement. He knows that this can surely occur if the studies go on. We have already noted that one must be sufficiently careful lest this first encounter with the superior of the Kingdom Hall turns into a debate. When a debate becomes necessary it must be scheduled for another day; this allows time for adequate preparation.

A debate sometimes becomes necessary when Jehovah's Witnesses find Seventh-day Adventist members or people interested in the SDA church who have scant Biblical background to meet their incursions. It may happen that Jehovah's Witnesses begin to study with them. Soon doubts and sincere questions give evidence of the struggle the ill-prepared adherents face in their longings for the true knowledge of God's will. A debate, then, may become imperative to help keep such people in the right way.

Sometimes you may find people--prospective converts--studying with Jehovah's Witnesses. Do not miss the opportunity of studying the Bible with them. Their hearts are now open to the teachings of God's Word and, of course, they are easier to win to the Gospel now than when already baptized Jehovah's Witnesses. Do not try to prevent them from continuing their study with the Jehovah's Witnesses.
However, you may say, "The Lord, in his great mercy, has shown me some marvelous things in his Word which I would like to share with you." They probably will not decline the invitation to study the Bible with you. Set a day different from the one on which the Witnesses come to visit them for the Bible study. Make a Christo-centric approach of the Bible. Soon they will notice the divergencies and will ask questions to the Witnesses, who will answer according to their own views. Such a situation may be intensified to the point where the students themselves will request an encounter between you and the Witnesses in order that their doubts may be elucidated. "We want to know finally who is right," they say. It is up to you to explain that you believe the Word of God is a book to be studied and obeyed, not a source of controversy and quarrel; however, since they think that such an encounter is necessary for a better understanding of the Bible you will acquiesce.

These are three circumstances which can require a debate with Jehovah's Witnesses. In each one souls are involved "who have a desire to hear the evidences on both sides." These are precious souls who long for light, knowledge, and salvation. To our understanding, there is no other reason sufficiently forceful to justify a debate.

Suggestions for Debate

A debate with Jehovah's Witnesses always presents risks. To face them successfully some precautions must be taken. First of all, one needs to be spiritually and emotionally prepared for the

encounter. This is crucial for the strengthening of one's own faith and confidence that the truth will triumph. E. G. White notes that

Whenever it is necessary for the advancement of the cause of truth and the glory of God, that an opponent be met, how carefully, and with what humility should they [the advocates of truth] go into the conflict. With heartsearching, confession of sin, and earnest prayer, and often fasting for a time, they should entreat that God would especially help them, and give His saving, precious truth a glorious victory, that error might appear in its true deformity, and its advocates be completely discomfited.¹

Do not trust in yourself, in your own strength and ability. Be meek and humble and prompt to acknowledge that "a horse may be made ready for the battle, but victory comes from the Lord" (Prov 21:31, NEB). Therefore, never be boastful about what you know and can do, but rely on the Lord and his promises. Remember that the purpose of a debate is not to prove your knowledge and skills are greater and better than those of your opponent, nor is it merely to show that you are right and someone else is wrong. Of utmost importance are the souls whose eternal destiny is at stake. You may lose the debate, but if you get the souls with you to decide for Jesus and his truth you have won everything.

Be well acquainted with your Bible. Naturally this depends upon the time you spend studying it. Have crucial passages memorized and underlined in your Bible for quick location. A chain-reference of your own is a very helpful tool. Also be acquainted with Jehovah's Witnesses' line of argument. Study their books and magazines and know beforehand how they will argue.

¹Ibid., p. 165. You should be acquainted with all White's guidelines about debate with opposers of God's truth, from p. 162 through 167.
In general their argumentation is that of their literature. Be aware also of the various contradictions and inconsistencies found in their publications. You can make use of them in decisive moments.

Arrive on time for the encounter. Do not leave your home at the last moment; to come in a hurry will make you panting and hurried. You need to be as calm as possible. If the debate is to take place in the home of an interested person, it is good for you to arrive before the Witnesses. You can use the time before they come for an informal contact with the household; and you will be more relaxed and at ease when they arrive.

Never go alone for a debate with a Witness. He will not come alone to debate with you. Have one or two fellow church members with you. They will help the debate to go well. However, they must not join in the debate itself. Only you must speak since you are the one adequately prepared for the encounter. They may make remarks now and then during your exposition, as the debate processes, unless rules for the debate are established otherwise.

These rules must be clearly defined. They should be suggested by the very people in whose home the debate takes place and according to your own previously given orientation. Only one person on each side should present arguments. Others may or may not have permission for brief remarks. However, each debater must have his own turn and time to speak. While one speaks, the other and his colleagues must keep respectful silence. Time needs to be established equitably for each contender: if the first has the right to speak initially for fifteen minutes, for instance, the other must also have fifteen minutes to expose his own arguments. The debaters
should alternate as many times as necessary. In general no more
than three turns are required for a final conclusion. The subject
to be discussed must be previously established and maintained until
the end.

These simple rules are crucial to the development of a good
debate. They must be obeyed, otherwise you have the right to refuse
to continue participating. Do not accept an invitation to partake
in a debate in which everyone speaks at the same time. The result
would only be confusion and anarchy with much exasperation and the
nervous exchange of words. The Spirit of God would be dishonored
and the debate would lead nowhere. Paul's words in 1 Cor 14:40
are appropriate here: "All things should be done decently and in
order."

Your participation in the debate ought to be very positive.
Introduce yourself by affirming your belief that the Bible is the
holy Word of God and therefore no tool for polemics and contro-
versies, but since souls are needing greater elucidation about . . .
(mention the subject), you have decided to partake in this encounter.
Immediately invite everyone to kneel for a prayer directed by you.
Ask especially for the presence and direction of the Holy Spirit
and pray in behalf of sincere souls present in the meeting. This
is very important. The Witnesses will not kneel or even participate
in the prayer. They are forbidden to do so. Needless to say such
behavior can cause a negative impression upon the household and
place you at an advantage.

Plan to be the second person to speak. Immediately after
the prayer, ask for the Witness to speak and put the chronometer
to work. If a chronometer is not available ask for a member of the household to watch the time. While the Witness speaks, observe his line of argument, the direction he gives to his exposition, and how he quotes the Bible. Do not hesitate to take notes of some points you can use later in order to strengthen your argument. Be careful and self-controlled lest you interrupt the exposition by the Witness. Obey the rules so you will have greater authority to require that the rules be kept by them. As soon as the chronometer sounds, indicating that time is over, the Witness must stop speaking. Your turn has come.

Start by speaking calmly and politely with your confidence placed in God. Go on in this way until your time is up. E. G. White says:

Satan watches for a chance to get the advantage of ministers who are advocating the truth, and when they cease to put their entire trust in God, and their words are not in the spirit and love of Christ, the angels of God cannot strengthen and enlighten them. They leave them to their own strength, and evil angels press in their darkness; for this reason, the opponents of the truth sometimes seem to have the advantage, and the discussion does more harm than real good.2

Aim at the opponent's argument and not the arguer himself. Contradict his errors but never offend your opponent even if you have been offended. Respond to hatred with love. Let your words convey solid arguments in behalf of the truth and Christian grace at the same time. Paul states:

1 It has happened sometimes that the Witness concludes his exposition before his time is over, anticipating your turn. You still have the right to the same extension of time previously established.

2 Evangelism, p. 165.
Have nothing to do with stupid, senseless controversies; you know that they breed quarrels. And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but kindly to every one, an apt teacher, forbearing, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth, and they may escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will. (2 Tim 2:23-26)

Use the Bible with surety and nimbleness. Show that you are secure in your salvation in Christ and that you know God's truth. However, respect the integrity of the Bible. Do not force the Bible to say what it does not say only to support your point. Be honest with it and use it with fairness by taking into account the context, both historical and literary. Do not emphasize the error of your opponent but the truth of God as it is presented in his Word. However, short references to some points presented by the opponent in his exposition are advisable for the sake of contrast. This helps the inquiring souls to arrive at correct conclusions.

After your turn, the Witness may wish another opportunity to speak. A shorter time can be granted now. Then, after him, you have your second turn. If a third turn is necessary let a still smaller period of time be established. A division of time in three turns as follows has been advantageously used in encounters with Jehovah's Witnesses:

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<tr>
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<th>Witness</th>
<th>Christian</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>First turn</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Second turn</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
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<td>Third turn</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
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This plan gives the debate a duration of sixty minutes or a
little more. Thus, both physical and mental fatigue are avoided and the debate is finished in a cordial atmosphere. Only in extraordinary cases should a debate exceed this time limit. If another subject needs to be discussed, a second meeting should be arranged.

A final word of prayer must put an end to the encounter. However, prior to that, you can ask members of the household to share their opinions about what was discussed. God has given me the opportunity to hear at this exact moment the positive testimony in behalf of the Gospel from precious souls who were previously "in the valley of decision." I am confident that a debate with Jehovah's Witnesses, motivated by a good purpose and developed in a correct way under the direction of the Holy Spirit, can become a decisive factor for the salvation of souls.

Conclusion

What has been presented in this chapter suggests one way Jehovah's Witnesses can be won for the Gospel. Different approaches may prove as effective as this one, or even more effective. Certainly each one will be able to create a personal method developed by direct contact with Jehovah's Witnesses in the field. Experience is, in fact, an excellent teacher. Books and articles have been written about Jehovah's Witnesses and how to work for them. They are also of great value.

Methods of approach can be diverse and each one has its merits and difficulties. However, there is only one purpose in working for Jehovah's Witnesses--to win them to Christ. Do not try
to contact Jehovah's Witnesses simply to convince them of their errors or merely to win them for "our" message. There is no value in merely convincing Jehovah's Witnesses that they are wrong in rejecting blood transfusion, for example, or in disbelieving the visible return of Christ and the personality of the Holy Spirit. Their mere assent to or denial of doctrinal issues will not solve their real problem. They will continue to be lost until they are led to Christ in a genuine experience of conversion. True evangelism will provide such an experience for them.

Unfortunately, evangelism is sometimes mistaken for proselytism, the mere presentation or teaching of a set of doctrines for which the force of argumentation is totally compelling. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why some Christians are more convinced of Christianity than converted to Christianity. E. G. White states:

God would draw minds from the conviction of logic to a conviction deeper, higher, purer, and more glorious. . . . Some ministers err in making their sermons wholly argumentative. . . . Sometimes men and women decide in favor of the truth because of the weight of evidence presented, without being converted.¹

As noted in chapter 1, Christianity really contains a set of doctrines to be presented to the world, but such doctrines are but the very expression of Christ and his life. The practice of these is valid as an external reflection of one's intimate experience of belonging to Christ. Thus they are the expression of Christian life which has its beginning and raison d'être in the enjoyment of God's salvation. In genuine evangelism the presentation of Biblical

doctrines never dislocate Christ from the central place which
belongs to him by right. Note:

Let the science of salvation be the burden of every sermon,
the theme of every song. Let it be poured forth in every
supplication. Bring nothing into your preaching to supplement
Christ, the wisdom and power of God. Hold forth the word of
life, presenting Christ as the hope of every believer. Reveal
the way of peace to the troubled and the despondent, and show
forth the grace and completeness of the Savior.¹

Christ, the greatest evangelist, was not so much preoccupied
with substantiating the truth by means of mere argumentation, but
in proclaiming it in simple and direct terms in such a way that
sinners heard exactly what they needed for salvation. To the
Samaritan woman he offered the water of life. To Nicodemus, the
Pharisee, he emphasized the necessity for a new birth. To the
hungry and thirsty crowd he presented himself as the bread and
water of life. To Zacchaeus he granted forgiveness and assurance
of salvation. To those who were in darkness he said, "I am the
light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in darkness,
but will have the light of life" (John 8:12). On the last day of
the feast of Tabernacles he proclaimed: "If any one thirst, let
him come to me and drink" (John 7:37). His message had to do with
salvation from sin. He did not want mere intellectual assent. He
aimed at the heart and longed for the personal decision of his
hearers. He is the model evangelist and the substance of evangelism.
He said: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all
men to myself" (John 12:32).

Lift up Jesus, you that teach the people, lift Him up in
sermon, in song, in prayer. Let all your powers be directed

¹Ibid., p. 160.
to pointing souls, confused, bewildered, lost, to "the Lamb of God." Lift Him up, the risen Savior, and say to all who hear, Come to Him who "hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us" (Eph 5:2).¹

Therefore do not only indoctrinate Jehovah's Witnesses but evangelize them. In order to do that, keep in mind the following:

1. Have a correct knowledge of the Biblical message. You must be sure of what you teach. Peter says: "Always be prepared to make a defense to any one who calls you to account for the hope that is in you, yet do it with gentleness and reverence" (1 Pet 3:15).

2. Know the teachings of Jehovah's Witnesses well enough to meet their positions. Read their books and magazines and make an adequate evaluation of what you read from the Biblical perspective.

3. Experience for yourself the great salvation of God in Christ Jesus. This is the most important aspect of your preparation for winning Witnesses. If you love them and want to help them enjoy God's free salvation, you have first to be saved. Only so you will indeed be able to communicate the Gospel with power. As E. G. White states:

The Gospel is to be presented, not as lifeless theory, but a living force to change the life. God desires that the receivers of His grace shall be witnesses to its power. . . . Tell the people of Him who is "the Chieapest among ten thousands," and the One "altogether lovely." Words alone cannot tell it. Let it be reflected in the character and manifested in the life. . . . In every one Christ's longsuffering love, His holiness, meekness, mercy, and truth, are to be manifested to the world.²

Thus, let us evangelize Jehovah's Witnesses. "They must be confronted with the Gospel of Jesus Christ," Walter R. Martin

¹Ibid. ²Desire of Ages, pp. 826, 827.
For the sake of those sincere and longing for salvation, we say, they must. They need to be reached and rescued as brands "plucked from the fire" (Zech 3:2); their fear of a future Armageddon has to be replaced by the joy of salvation in Christ, which can be enjoyed here and now; their spiritual insecurity moving them to a regime of works and servitude must yield to the certainty of forgiveness and acceptance that imbues the soul with heavenly rest and freedom through the Holy Spirit.

Let us exalt Christ before them as he "who was put to death for our trespasses and raised for our justification" (Rom 4:25), that they may also "comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge" (Eph 3:18, 19). Let us lead them in faith to the glorified Lord in Heaven where as God/man he ministers in our behalf and from where he will come to redeem our bodies and grant us immortality. Let us invite them to embrace this most sublime hope and to expect a "better resurrection" to a "better country, that is, a heavenly one" (Heb 11:35, 16).

With such a vision of Christ they will certainly be moved to accept him, not as merely the highest officer of Jehovah, not only as their king, but as their Savior, Lord, and God. Let us help them be Jesus' witnesses, to be Christians.

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