

Is Leaving *Really* the Only Option?

Part Four: Is It *Really* About “Loyalty?” And To Whom?

The issue over loyalty is one that dominates much of what we have discussed thus far in this series of articles. It also dominates much of our literature, whether through the pages of the *Watchtower* magazine, our *Kingdom Ministry* issues, or any of the other millions of pages of literature that is published by the Society annually for our consumption. As we come into the organization, for example, we are shown “evidences” that Jehovah has an “earthly organization,” that this “earthly organization” is the only place where we can find religious truth, and that if we want to survive the coming Day of Jehovah, we must remain loyal to Jehovah’s “earthly” or “visible organization.” Even if the Society is wrong on a given Bible understanding, we would be proving ourselves disloyal either to raise a discussion concerning the error, or if we take any form of stand against it. Worse still, we are demonstrating our disloyalty if we *leave* the organization.

Indeed, this issue of “loyalty” doesn’t stop with these things. We must *also* continue to be loyal towards the Society itself, in its identity as the “faithful and discreet slave,” and as “Christ’s brothers.” In fact, this is so vital to us, that any act of “disloyalty” will result in our destruction. Notice the statements published by the Society concerning how they themselves should be treated by the remainder of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” in the following cited passages:

In the parable of the sheep and the goats, the Son of man arrives in his glory in the period of the great tribulation and sits in judgment. He judges people on the basis of whether they gave support to Christ’s anointed brothers. This standard for judgment would be meaningless if at the time of judgment, all of Christ’s brothers had long since left the earthly scene.—Matthew 25:31-46. (*Watchtower*, January 15, 2000)

¹⁷ Second, the preaching of the good news lays the foundation for God’s righteous judgment. About that judgment, Jesus said: “When the Son of man arrives in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down on his glorious throne. And all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” Though the judging and separating will be done “when the Son of man arrives in his glory,” the preaching work is providing people today with the opportunity to recognize Christ’s spiritual brothers and thus to work in support of them for their own eternal salvation.—Matthew 25:31-46. (*Watchtower*, June 1, 2000, page 13-14)

¹⁰ Is Jesus saying that everyone doing a small kindness to one of his brothers, such as offering a piece of bread or a glass of water, qualifies as one of these sheep? Granted, rendering such kindnesses may reflect human kindness, but really, it seems that much more is involved with the sheep of this parable. Jesus was hardly referring, for example, to atheists or clergymen who happen to do a kind act to one of his brothers. On the contrary, Jesus twice called the sheep “righteous ones.” (Matthew 25:37, 46) So the sheep must be ones who over a period of time have come to the aid of—actively supporting—Christ’s brothers and have exercised faith to the extent of receiving a righteous standing before God. (*Watchtower*, October 15, 1995, page 25)

¹⁵ According to Jesus’ parable, the righteous “sheep” must meet certain requirements during “the conclusion of the system of things.” They have to recognize and acknowledge Christ’s spiritual

“brothers” who make up “the faithful and discreet slave” class. “The sheep” must also do good things to the “slave” class, even visit them when they are unjustly confined in prison. This “the sheep” must do so as to enjoy the blessing of the heavenly Father and have the King Jesus Christ invite them to “inherit the kingdom prepared for [them] from the founding of the world.”—Matthew 25:34. (Watchtower, February 1, 1985, page 22)

Of course, these are mere samplings from the hundreds of similar statements made by the Society concerning our responsibility to them and the need for our loyalty in order to secure salvation. Still, the *central* theme for the teaching revolves around the Society’s current understanding of Matthew 25, when Jesus arrives in Kingdom glory to separate the “sheep” from the “goats.”

It would be important, then, that we at least take some time to examine the scriptural passage so heavily relied upon for insisting that we be loyal to the Society. If the understanding is correct, it will be proven by the scriptures upon which it is said to be founded.

Examining Matthew 25:31-46

“When the Son of man arrives in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down on his glorious throne. ³² And all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another, just as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will put the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left.

³⁴ **“Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, YOU who have been blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for YOU from the founding of the world. ³⁵ For I became hungry and YOU gave me something to eat; I got thirsty and YOU gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and YOU received me hospitably; ³⁶ naked, and YOU clothed me. I fell sick and YOU looked after me. I was in prison and YOU came to me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous ones will answer him with the words, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty, and give you something to drink? ³⁸ When did we see you a stranger and receive you hospitably, or naked, and clothe you? ³⁹ When did we see you sick or in prison and go to you?’ ⁴⁰ And in reply the king will say to them, ‘Truly I say to YOU, To the extent that YOU did it to one of the least of these my brothers, YOU did it to me.’**

⁴¹ **“Then he will say, in turn, to those on his left, ‘Be on YOUR way from me, YOU who have been cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels. ⁴² For I became hungry, but YOU gave me nothing to eat, and I got thirsty, but YOU gave me nothing to drink. ⁴³ I was a stranger, but YOU did not receive me hospitably; naked, but YOU did not clothe me; sick and in prison, but YOU did not look after me.’ ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer with the words, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison and did not minister to you?’ ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them with the words, ‘Truly I say to YOU, To the extent that YOU did not do it to one of these least ones, YOU did not do it to me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will depart into everlasting cutting-off, but the righteous ones into everlasting life.”—Matthew 25:31-46, NWT**

Now, in reading the passage in its entirety, there are some facts that seem to go ignored by the Society’s current understanding—and subsequently the Society’s application of the scriptures.

First, notice that neither those composing the “sheep” nor those composing the “goats” are aware of the significance of their acts of kindness. Both groups ask the question “When did we see you hungry? Thirsty? As a stranger? Naked? Imprisoned?” This may not initially seem significant, but according to the Society’s teaching on this subject, loyal “Jehovah’s Witnesses” must *first* identify and then offer accommodations to “Christ’s brothers,” that is, the “anointed” or “144,000.” To the *extent* that we identify and then act loyally towards “Christ’s brothers,” we will obtain a righteous standing before Jesus when he judges the “sheep” and the “goats.” Therefore, *if* we identify the Society as Christ’s brothers, loyally support them in all they do and teach, and care for them, we are unable to ask the question that the scriptures say will be asked by those judged as “sheep,” since we are said to *already* know now that how we treat Christ’s “brothers” is the same as doing so towards Jesus. So, the question asked by the “sheep” in the passage is pointless, since Christ’s brothers would not be “strangers” to us. This is doubly true in that according to the current observance of the Memorial, only the “anointed” partake of the emblems, thus providing outward identification of those who consider themselves among “Christ’s brothers.” In our congregations, we *know* who believes themselves to be of the “144,000” who are “Christ’s brothers,” do we not?

Another problem lies in the expression “inherit the kingdom.” According to the *New World Translation*, this ties to Revelation 5:10, a scripture that is said by the Society to apply to the 144,000—*not* to the “Great Crowd.” Therefore, this introduces the possibility that the separation of the “sheep” and the “goats” may actually be a parallel explanation of when the “faithful and the discreet slave” is separated from the “wicked slave,” both of whom were assigned to care for the household. Otherwise, why cross-reference the scripture to the one in Revelation 5:10?

Finally, there is the problem in properly understanding what Jesus means when he says “**To the extent that YOU did it to one of the least of these my brothers, YOU did it to me.**” (Verse 40) Here, we are presented with a grammatical structure similar to that found at Luke 23:43, which reads:

And he said to him: “Truly I tell you today, You will be with me in Paradise.”—Luke 23:43 (NWT)

In this particular passage, the NWT departs from the mainstream translation by inserting a comma *after* the word “today” to make the meaning of Jesus’ words more clear, and with good reason, since most Bible translations word the sentence to say “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise,” thus supporting the unscriptural teaching that when we die, we go off to heaven.

It becomes evident that the simple placement of a punctuation mark, such as a *comma* in Luke 23:43 can change the entire meaning of a scripture—and since the original Greek does not include punctuation marks, it falls upon the translator to make the determination as to what a passage should say to non-Greek speaking readers.

Of course, part of the task is to make sure that one’s translation still keeps that which is translated in harmony with the remainder of the Bible, and the NWT does the right thing in punctuating Luke 23:43 as it has done, because students of God’s Word

know that when we die, we do *not* go off to heaven, but are said to rest, asleep in death, until the resurrection.

The reason why this is being presented to the reader is because Matthew 24:40 presents the same challenging grammatical issues as were confronted at Luke 23:43. The placement, inclusion or lack of inclusion of a single comma can render a completely different understanding of the scripture in question. More specifically, in the interest of making sure that Matthew 25:40 *fit* with (and support) current Society teaching regarding the Society, the translators may very well have allowed interpretational bias to interfere with proper expression of the passage.

To wit, it is entirely supportable from scriptures to write Matthew 25:40 in the following manner and not disrupt the overall harmony of the Bible or its fundamental teachings:

“To the extent that YOU did it to one of the least of these, my brothers, YOU did it to me.”

Notice the insertion of a comma *before* “my brothers.” What this does is provide a probable, supportable alternative rendering of the passage. Of course, in so doing, we immediately overturn the Society’s current understanding—but do we have scriptural grounds for this alternative rendering? Does it disrupt what the Bible teaches?

Actually, it fits perfectly with the rest of the passage. In speaking with those judged to be “sheep,” Jesus not only points out how they have faithfully carried out Christlike love by caring, watching over, and providing for even those one might consider insignificant, he also is proud to refer to these faithful ones as his own *brothers*, a warm and loving reference denoting how close a relationship Jesus considers them to have with him. (Compare with Matthew 12:50)

Contrast this with how Jesus speaks to those he determined to be “goats,” not offering such an expression to them. Also, notice that the expression “my brothers” is absent in the second instance—even if we omit the alternative rendering of Verse 40. Again, this is significant: there is no mention of the expression “my brothers” in the second judgment and rebuke, of the “goats.” They are rejected, even to the extent that Jesus gets the point across that he never even *knew* them.

This should remind us of Matthew 7:21-23, where Jesus said that while there would be those who would call upon the name of Jehovah, pronounce Jehovah’s judgments under Jehovah’s authority (act as “prophets”), expel demons and even perform what appear to be “powerful works” in Jehovah’s or Jesus’ name, that in spite of doing all of these things, they would be *rejected* at the time of judgment. And why? Because they had failed to *do the will of Jehovah*. These “workers of lawlessness” will be judged as “goats” in the coming separation of the “sheep” and the “goats.”

Indeed, in spite of all the “powerful works” that are being done in Jehovah’s name, in spite of all the publicizing of Jehovah’s judgments, the *will* of Jehovah was still going ignored.

Really, then, if making known Jehovah's judgments (acting as a prophet) [EndNote #1] is not on the list of things that will find one judged to be a "sheep," what then? What *is* the "will of Jehovah"?

The Bible provides us with the answer, actually.

First, notice John 6:40:

For this is the will of my Father, that everyone that beholds the Son and exercises faith in him should have everlasting life, and I will resurrect him at the last day.—John 6:40 (NWT)

Here, we are told that it is Jehovah's will that we exercise faith in the Son, that we might obtain everlasting life. This is very similar to what Peter wrote at 2 Peter 3:9, where the apostle says "**...but he is patient with you because he does not desire any to be destroyed but desires all to attain to repentance.**"

Still, there is more involved in discerning the Will of Jehovah God than just the candy-coated teaching of Christendom that all you need to do is *believe in Jesus and be saved*. At the same time, we are warned against giving prominence to "powerful works" as demonstration of our faith, as some are prone to do in order to "prove" God's blessings on our activities.

We can be engaged in "powerful works" that far exceed anyone else's so-called "works," and yet still be judged as "goats" when Jesus arrives to render judgment. Relying upon, then, such "powerful works" as a worldwide ministry, publishing millions of pages of literature, or even staying faithful to the Memorial's proper observation are of no consequence when the weightier matters take a "back seat" to such "works."

Notice, by way of example, Jehovah's taking Israel to task over their form of worship, one which promoted "powerful works":

Hear the word of Jehovah, YOU dictators of Sod'om. Give ear to the law of our God, YOU people of Go-mor'rah. ¹¹ "Of what benefit to me is the multitude of YOUR sacrifices?" says Jehovah. "I have had enough of whole burnt offerings of rams and the fat of well-fed animals; and in the blood of young bulls and male lambs and he-goats I have taken no delight. ¹² When YOU people keep coming in to see my face, who is it that has required this from YOUR hand, to trample my courtyards? ¹³ Stop bringing in any more valueless grain offerings. Incense—it is something detestable to me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of a convention—I cannot put up with the [use of] uncanny power along with the solemn assembly. ¹⁴ YOUR new moons and YOUR festal seasons my soul has hated. To me they have become a burden; I have become tired of bearing [them]. ¹⁵ And when YOU spread out YOUR palms, I hide my eyes from YOU. Even though YOU make many prayers, I am not listening; with bloodshed YOUR very hands have become filled. ¹⁶ Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the badness of YOUR dealings from in front of my eyes; cease to do bad. ¹⁷ Learn to do good; search for justice; set right the oppressor; render judgment for the fatherless boy; plead the cause of the widow."—Isaiah 1:10-17 (NWT)

Here, then, we can begin to grasp what Jehovah is looking for in those who will serve him wholeheartedly. Jesus summed it up best when he said **“Go, then, and learn what this means, ‘I want mercy, and not sacrifice.’”** (Matthew 9:13, NWT) Even the apostle Paul fully understood the weightier matters of Jehovah, what our Grand Creator’s *Will* was, when Paul was compelled to write, **“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels but do not have love, I have become a sounding [piece of] brass or a clashing slymbal. And if I have the gift of prophesying and am acquainted with all the sacred secrets and all knowledge, and if I have all the faith so as to transplant mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give all my belongings to feed others, and if I hand over my body, that I may boast, but do not have love, I am not profited at all.”** (1 Corinthians 13:1-3, NWT)

The danger comes from using these acts to prove our righteousness, to set ourselves as “different” or “apart” from everyone else. We say to others “Look at us! We’re doing this-or-that and we’re the only ones out there doing it.” Such an approach to our dedication to our Grand Creator is mere contrivance, and is sadly in want. (Confer Matthew 6:1-8) The truth is that such things can actually *defile* our form of worship, as we become beguiled under the delusion that through *works* we obtain salvation.

James, another apostle, succinctly put the pieces together for us when he wrote:

The form of worship that is clean and undefiled from the standpoint of our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself without spot from the world.—James 1:17 (NWT)

When we consider this admonishment, we should be reminded that it was precisely because of these things becoming ignored or overlooked that Jehovah God brought judgment against Israel in the past—and it would be foolishness on our part to think that He won’t bring the same judgment against *us* when we become guilty of the same thing. (1 Corinthians 10:11) Mercy will *always* take precedence over anything we do or build with our hands through “powerful works.” “Powerful works” can be performed without one iota of Christian love, but not so with mercy. One is not moved to be merciful unless they first *love*.

“...the least of these...”

Returning now to our discussion on Matthew 25, let us spend some time examining another facet of the passage, namely what was meant when Jesus said “the least of these.” After all, according to the Society, this is in reference to those making up the collective “144,000” anointed Christians, or “the faithful and discreet slave.” However, what seems to go unaddressed by the Society in this interpretation is how any one of the “144,000” are *lesser than* any other person in the group of anointed Christians. It seems to go without explanation throughout the literature, as though it is already a foregone conclusion. Yet, the understanding and application conflicts with what Jesus himself taught to the disciples: that they were *equal*, with none either *greater or lesser* than the

others—even though this would be a point of contention during the duration of Jesus’ three-and-a-half year ministry and training of his disciples:

But YOU, do not YOU be called Rabbi, for one is YOUR teacher, whereas all YOU are brothers. ⁹ Moreover, do not call anyone YOUR father on earth, for one is YOUR Father, the heavenly One. ¹⁰ **Neither be called ‘leaders,’ for YOUR Leader is one, the Christ.** ¹¹ **But the greatest one among YOU must be YOUR minister.** ¹² **Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.**—Matthew 23:8-12 (NWT)

⁴⁶ Then a reasoning entered among them as **to who would be the greatest of them.** ⁴⁷ Jesus, knowing the reasoning of their hearts, took a young child, set it beside him ⁴⁸ and said to them: “Whoever receives this young child on the basis of my name receives me [too], and whoever receives me receives him [also] that sent me forth. **For he that conducts himself as a lesser one among all of YOU is the one that is great.**”—Luke 9:46-48 (NWT)

However, there also arose a heated dispute among them **over which one of them seemed to be greatest.** ²⁵ But he said to them: “The kings of the nations lord it over them, and those having authority over them are called Benefactors. ²⁶ **YOU, though, are not to be that way.** But let him that is the greatest among YOU become as the youngest, and the one acting as chief as the one ministering. ²⁷ For which one is greater, the one reclining at the table or the one ministering? Is it not the one reclining at the table? But I am in YOUR midst as the one ministering.—Luke 22:24-27 (NWT)

Again, we see the common failing that takes place among those who seek out true worship, by the subtle deception that any one person is to be viewed “greater” than someone else, either through responsibility or organizational authority. The tendency, once this kind of thinking is in place, is to *lord* one’s position over others, to use it to get others to bend to a single will. It subsequently becomes far easier for Satan to take hold of the body of believers, as all the great Apostate needs to do at that point is take control of or otherwise influence this hierarchical “steering wheel” to get the rest of the body to go in the direction he wishes.

For the Society’s understanding and application to hold true, that any one of “Christ’s brothers” can be established as *least* among the others, they would need to demonstrate from the scriptures that this was so—and there simply are not any Bible references to be found where someone was viewed by Jesus as “greater” or “better” than one of his other disciples. At the same time, Jesus *did* provide some rules-of-thumb by which a disciple could demonstrate that they were “greater” by proving themselves *lesser*, but, again, the final determination is made upon Jesus’ return, not at any point before then, and certainly without the (potentially “greater”) disciple having to point out that he is greater because he is making himself lesser. Such an approach would be lacking in the required humility of such a resolve, would it not?

On the other hand, there is *ample* evidence that the expression “least of these” can apply to *anyone*, at any given time. For example, perhaps the reader is familiar with the expression Jesus used on numerous occasions, “little ones.” We will look at some of those examples in a moment.

First, we need to once again re-examine the Society’s explanation and application by discussing original Greek word translated here as “least.” That word is *elachistos* and it carries the meaning “smallest or least in the estimation of men.” (*Strong’s*) How

appropriate, considering the nature of the “least ones” being aided, cared and provided for in the parable of the “sheep” and the “goats.” How fitting that Jesus would say that to the extent that these seemingly insignificant ones were either provided for or neglected, each was *equal in value to Christ himself*. What a contrast to the outer appearances by which men judge one another!

“Stop judging from the outward appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”—John 7:24 (NWT)

Even James gave a scathing reproof to those who judged others as “least.”

My brothers, YOU are not holding the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, our glory, with acts of favoritism, are YOU? ² For, if a man with gold rings on his fingers and in splendid clothing enters into a gathering of YOU, but a poor [man] in filthy clothing also enters, ³ yet YOU look with favor upon the one wearing the splendid clothing and say: “You take this seat here in a fine place,” and YOU say to the poor one: “You keep standing,” or: “Take that seat there under my footstool.” ⁴ YOU have class distinctions among yourselves and YOU have become judges rendering wicked decisions, is that not so?

⁵ Listen, my beloved brothers. God chose the ones who are poor respecting the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he promised to those who love him, did he not? ⁶ YOU, though, have dishonored the poor [man].—James 2:1-6 (NWT)

This mistreatment of the “least ones” hardly stops with these things, though. The Bible also speaks of the grave judgment which will come upon those who *stumble* such ones in their faith:

In that hour the disciples came near to Jesus and said: “Who really is greatest in the kingdom of the heavens?” ² So, calling a young child to him, he set it in their midst ³ and said: “Truly I say to YOU, Unless YOU turn around and become as young children, YOU will by no means enter into the kingdom of the heavens. ⁴ Therefore, whoever will humble himself like this young child is the one that is the greatest in the kingdom of the heavens; ⁵ and whoever receives one such young child on the basis of my name receives me [also]. ⁶ But whoever stumbles one of these little ones who put faith in me, it is more beneficial for him to have hung around his neck a millstone such as is turned by an ass and to be sunk in the wide, open sea.

⁷ “Woe to the world due to the stumbling blocks! Of course, the stumbling blocks must of necessity come, but woe to the man through whom the stumbling block comes! ⁸ If, then, your hand or your foot is making you stumble, cut it off and throw it away from you; it is finer for you to enter into life maimed or lame than to be thrown with two hands or two feet into the everlasting fire. ⁹ Also, if your eye is making you stumble, tear it out and throw it away from you; it is finer for you to enter one-eyed into life than to be thrown with two eyes into the fiery Ge-hen’na. ¹⁰ See to it that YOU men do not despise one of these little ones; for I tell YOU that their angels in heaven always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven.—Matthew 18:1-10 (NWT)

In the world of men, the “great ones,” the men of renown, are the television and movie and sports stars, the career politicians, the scholars and scientists and doctors, the men of high religious station in their respective denominations. But in Jehovah God’s world, these things are mere chaff, waiting for the strong gales of blasting judgment soon to come upon this system of things. When we accord high honor to men, even within the

Christian congregation, we are assuming the same mentality that we are warned against. True, we should always *respect* those who have demonstrated hard work in the faith, but within even our organization, too often Witnesses go far beyond this, venturing towards the chasm of human worship. Attending any District Convention where members of the Governing Body is but one example, where an observer will see so many Witnesses nearly falling over themselves for such men, praising them to those seated nearby. In effect, such behavior actually *perpetuates* the misplaced loyalty that is being discussed in this article. Such statements as “Well, who is it that taught you what you know? Who is it that has spent tireless hours in preparing this ‘food’ for you?” It becomes an *owing*, an obligation of loyalty, an expectation of recompense. Yet, this, too, is contrary to the scriptures, in that we are not to *owe* anybody anything, except *love*. (Romans 13:8)

One more scripture that needs to be examined in light of this discussion of Matthew 25 is found at Mark 9:38-42:

John said to him: “Teacher, we saw a certain man expelling demons by the use of your name and we tried to prevent him, because he was not accompanying us.”³⁹ But Jesus said: “Do not try to prevent him, for there is no one that will do a powerful work on the basis of my name that will quickly be able to revile me;⁴⁰ for he that is not against us is for us.⁴¹ For whoever gives YOU a cup of water to drink on the ground that YOU belong to Christ, I truly tell YOU, he will by no means lose his reward.⁴² But whoever stumbles one of these little ones that believe, it would be finer for him if a millstone such as is turned by an ass were put around his neck and he were actually pitched into the sea.—Mark 9:38-42 (NWT)

There are two points that need to be discussed in the above passage. First, Jesus said that those who gave the disciples “a cup of water” on the basis that they “belong to Christ” will “by no means lose” their reward. This seems to indicate that the disciples would be given what they need, and this is a thought that Jesus elsewhere confirms. (Confer Luke 10:7) Again, this argues *against* the current understanding of the Society in reference to Matthew 25, since it further establishes that those who aid the disciples would *already know* that the disciples “belong to Christ,” and subsequently would understand the importance of assisting the disciples—thus ruling out their later asking how it was that they aided and cared for the “least” ones.

The second point from the above passage is that Jesus then shifts the focus. After talking about how there would be those who assist his soon-to-be apostles, he relates how tragic it would be if someone then turned around and stumbled “one of these little ones that believe.” Yet this is a striking example of what is happening in our organization, and others as well. While the Society has been getting the assistance of “loyal Jehovah’s Witnesses,” they, in turn, demand fealty that they claim is owed to their position. In addition, the Society has placed numerous stumbling blocks before Witnesses, including such teachings as 1914, or the mishandling of the “two-witness rule.”

While it is true that many hundreds or thousands are disfellowshipped each year for immorality, there are an unknown number who either drift away or leave the organization because they have been stumbled in their faith. And among that number, many turn to serving the Trinitarian god. Placing the blame on so-called “apostate literature” or participating on internet “chat rooms” is to shift both responsibility and accountability for the *real* cause: a lack of love in the Witness organization that provides, cares for, and clothes the ones in need. Sadly enough, these “least ones” are viewed by

others in the congregation as being “spiritually weak” and little more is known about them. They show up at the occasional meeting, keep to themselves, or just stay away entirely. Some have taken their concerns to elders, only to be met with disdain at expressing a “lack of faith” in the Society’s teachings, or otherwise accused of having a “problem with authority.” Whatever the case, more individuals slip through the organization’s cracks than is actually acknowledged by the Society.

But what will be said in the day of Jesus’ judgment, when the argument is made “When did we see you naked or hungry or in prison?” Jesus will then tell such “goatlike” ones that to the *extent* that they cared for, watched over, and soothed the so-called insignificant ones, they were doing such things to Jesus himself, and to the *extent* that they ignored such ones, they ignored the greatest commandment of all: *love*. They might as well have rejected Christ himself—and Jesus will thereafter reject them everlastingly. They will *never* be acknowledged as “brothers” because they never *were*. In spite of all of their “powerful works,” they had overlooked the weightier matters, such as *mercy* and *justice*.

Having dispensed, then, with the Society’s claim that we must be loyal to them, to the “144,000” or “anointed class” in order to gain salvation, and overcoming the claims by using scriptural evidences to the contrary, there remains the question of where our loyalty as Christians *should* be.

Loyal, But to Whom?

There is no disputing the fact that as Christians, we are obligated to remain loyal in our dedication. Just as a husband would not prove unfaithful to his wife, we would never want to place or find ourselves in a situation where that loyalty is undermined by carnal desires or worldly interests. Our relationship both with Jesus—as one of his disciples—and with Jehovah God—as our Grand Creator and Sovereign Lord, should be the utmost priority in our life. All other things should be secondary to that. (Matthew 6:33) This includes any sense of loyalty we feel towards those claiming to be acting as agents of Jesus and/or Jehovah God. If we are not careful, we may find ourselves giving loyalty when it is *respect* that should be rendered. Additionally, there is never a scriptural proof that loyalty to humans should ever exceed the loyalty that we owe either Jesus or Jehovah.

This creates a situation, then, where many try to *rationalize* misplaced loyalty. For example, we are taught as Witnesses that we demonstrate our loyalty to Jehovah God by submitting and obeying to those whom He has appointed over His “visible organization,” even when we disagree or disapprove of something which that “faithful and discreet slave” promotes or enacts, even if we can present scriptural reasons for our disagreement. By this “Go along, even if wrong” mindset, we are, in effect, saying that the words recorded at Acts 5:29 do not apply to us today. What fails to be realized, though, is that if *all* Christians had taken the approach that the Society expects from us, we would still be worshipping under the Roman Catholic Church. There never would have been a Martin Luther, or other reformists. There never would have come the day when

we could privately own a Bible and read it in the comfort of our own home. There would never even have been the Bible Students movement, which started when Charles Taze Russell and a few friends sat down together and made a systematic study of the Bible in comparison with what their respective denominations were teaching them. Indeed, if the “Go along, right or wrong” mindset had been practiced by Christians down through the ages, Christianity would most certainly look and feel different from what it is today.

As the situation recorded in Acts 5:27-32 arose, Peter and the other apostles would have relented to the demands of the religious hierarchy of their day. After all, the Pharisees *were* the Governing Body in the days of Jesus and the apostles. The Sanhedrin *were* the judicial committee who had the power and authority to disfellowship anyone who spoke against the Pharisees or against the established body of Jewish teachings. The apostles were accused of spreading teachings that ran counter to that which was approved for the public as set forth by the Governing Body of Pharisees, and yet the apostles said that they “must obey God as ruler rather than men.” They were acting as witnesses to the things which they had seen and heard, and it was unconscionable to remain silent. This hardly pleased the religious leaders, but it was the truth.

On a similar occasion, Peter even went so far as to tell the Governing Body and their representatives, **“Whether it is righteous in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, judge for yourselves. But as for us, we cannot stop speaking about the things we have seen and heard.”** (Acts 4:19-20, NWT) And this was said after Peter and John were ordered to discontinue “to make any utterance or to teach upon the basis of the name of Jesus.” (Acts 4:18) In other words, the religious leaders were accusing the apostles of speaking without granted authority, granted by *the Governing Body of Pharisees*, of course. And this is the same argument that is made today by the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses, and their representatives—whether they are branch, district, or circuit overseers or even local elders. The accusation arises when one of “Jehovah’s Witnesses” tries to point out an error in our body of teachings, “Do you think you know more than the Society? Has Jehovah appointed *you* as the “faithful and discreet slave?” These brothers have devoted their entire lives to studying the Bible and leading the organization, and you think you know more than they do? You obviously have a problem with authority!”

It’s a response that should be expected by us, when we attempt to take a stand for truth and accuracy in our worship. After all, even Jesus was asked the same question by the Governing Body in *his* day, was he not? (Matthew 21:23) Who asked him that question? It was *the chief priests and the older men!* The recognized body of authority in place in the early part of the first century.

On yet another occasion, when a man who had been healed of his blindness was brought before a judicial committee, the man pointedly asked them why they were inquiring so much about the source and yet criticizing that source as somehow flawed, even though the source itself was of God. The response he was given? **“You are a disciple of that man, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses; but as for this man, we do not know where he is from.”** (John 9:27, NWT) Very little has changed today, when the Society outright rejects anyone whom they themselves do not *recognize* as an approved representative. Notice what this man said in response to their reviling of him, though:

In answer the man said to them: “This certainly is a marvel, that YOU do not know where he is from, and yet he opened my eyes.”³¹ We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is God-fearing and does his will, he listens to this one.³² From of old it has never been heard that anyone opened the eyes of one born blind.³³ If this [man] were not from God, he could do nothing at all.”—John 9:30-33 (NWT)

This earned him still more despite, when they angrily retorted, “**You were altogether born in sins, and yet are you teaching us?**” **And they threw him out!** (John 9:34, NWT) Sad, but true, the Society welcomes letters of inquiry from us, but when we challenge the established body of teachings their response is not so warm. Furthermore, if we “persist” in this so-called “spreading of private interpretations,” we face being disfellowshipped and cut-off from the congregation. Thereafter, if anyone wants to prove their loyalty to the Society, they will have no further dealings with the individual or individuals who were disfellowshipped over doctrinal disagreements. We are told that if we want to demonstrate our loyalty to Jehovah, we will support the Society in their decision to “throw out” anyone who they feel is trying to “teach them.”

Here in the local area of the writer of this article, the East Lansing congregation was literally shut down and disbanded several years ago when several of its elders decided to take a stand over one of the Society’s teachings. Representatives of the Society simply arrived, locked the doors of the Kingdom Hall, disfellowshipped the elders and shifted the congregation members to surrounding congregations until it was believed that all the dissidents had been dealt with. While the Kingdom Hall has since been reopened and the East Lansing congregation is in place once more, nobody will speak of the incident beyond the vagaries that it *did* happen. It has simply become a taboo subject for local Witnesses to even *reference* the incident.

The question we are compelled to ask is whether these elders who were “thrown out” by the Society demonstrated loyalty by taking what they felt was the right stand before Jehovah God by challenging a particular policy or teaching (Acts 4:19-20; Acts 5:29), or whether they would have demonstrated loyalty by remaining silent and “waiting on Jehovah” to correct matters, something which the Society insists that we must do—yet amounts to saying that if Jehovah wants it fixed, He’ll have to correct them Himself. This rejection of correction or challenge of present teachings in light of scriptural evidences which support an alternative understanding is, simply put, a rejection of all Bible counsel which admonishes us to “make sure of all things.” As an example, the reader could research how the Society has consistently pointed to the Bereans as a commendable example of people who examined what they heard against the Bible to prove that what they were being told was, in fact, true—yet *after* we become a member of the Watchtower organization, we are not to do so concerning the Society’s teachings, because there is no *reason* to do so, once we have accepted things as true during the time leading up to our becoming a Witness:

It was probably about 50 C.E. when Paul and Silas arrived at Berea after a nighttime departure from Thessalonica made necessary by mob violence. Berea had a Jewish community and a synagogue in which the two missionaries preached. The readiness of the Bereans to give ear to their message, and their diligence in examining the Scriptures in search of confirmation of the things learned, earned them the commendation found at Acts 17:11.—*Insight*, Vol 1, Page 291. “Berea”

Now some may ask, Should we accept as from the Lord and true the food provided through the discreet slave, or should we withhold acceptance until we have proved it for ourselves? If we have gained our present understanding of the Bible by feeding at the table set by the slave, if we have been thereby freed from false doctrines and built up in the clean and undefiled worship of God and given a new world hope, we should have some confidence in the slave's provisions. After being nourished to our present spiritual strength and maturity, do we suddenly become smarter than our former provider and forsake the enlightening guidance of the organization that mothered us? "Forsake not the law of thy mother."—*Watchtower*, February 1, 1952, page 80

We can benefit from this consideration. If we have once established what instrument God is using as his "slave" to dispense spiritual food to his people, surely Jehovah is not pleased if we receive that food as though it might contain something harmful. We should have confidence in the channel God is using. At the Brooklyn headquarters from which the Bible publications of Jehovah's Witnesses emanate there are more mature Christian elders, both of the "remnant" and of the "other sheep," than anywhere else upon earth.—*Watchtower*, February 15, 1981, page 19

How shall we view the spiritual food provided by this "faithful and discreet slave"? Should it be viewed critically—'Oh, well, it might be true but then again it might not be and so we have to scrutinize it very critically'? Some apparently have felt that way about it. To support their way of thinking they have quoted Acts 17:11, which says of newly interested persons at Berea: "Now the latter were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with the greatest eagerness of mind, carefully examining the Scriptures daily as to whether these things were so."

But does this mean that those Bereans were looking for flaws in the message they were hearing, or that their attitude was one of doubting? Does this set a precedent for regarding critically the publications brought forth by the "faithful and discreet slave," with a view to finding fault? Not at all!—*Watchtower*, February 15, 1981, page 18

In the last-mentioned article, the suggestion is raised that any critical examination of the teachings of the Society is *not* supported by Acts 17:11, even though the previously mentioned article from the *Insight* book says that the Bereans used *diligence* in examining the Scriptures versus what they were being told. How can "diligence" not require the same amount of effort as critically examining? The Society does not address this question anywhere, but instead says that if we approach the literature with the thinking that it may or may not be true and that we need to examine it closely, that we are actually *doubting* them. The Society suggests that this critical examination is only to look "for flaws" and that such scrutinizing comes from an "attitude" of someone "doubting."

The fact is that while everywhere throughout our publications, the Society teaches us that we need to be critical of "outside" literature and newspaper articles and things non-Witnesses say to us, we are *not* to be critical of things that the Society says, even in light of the fact that through the history of the Watchtower organization various teachings *have been changed*. And to essentially *question* the Society is considered an act of disloyalty on our part, a rejection of the appointed "faithful and discreet slave"—thus introducing the issue of upholding their position over us as a compelling reason for us to go along, right or wrong.

But the real issue is to whom do we owe loyalty? To the Society or to Jehovah God? Is it *possible* for us to remain loyal to Jehovah God—to whom we have dedicated our life—while refusing to submit to obedience and mute support of religious leaders who teach under the acclaimed authority that the Society does? When there is a conflict

between what we perceive God's Word says versus what the Society teaches, are we required to render loyalty to the Society, or are we required, scripturally speaking, to simply respect their position over the organization, while refusing to disobey what we perceive to be Jehovah's Will?

This is a truly difficult premise, since we are taught as Witnesses that we *demonstrate* our loyalty to Jehovah by submitting and obeying the "faithful and discreet slave," even when they ask us to accept or do something which later turns out to be a false teaching. [EndNote #2], as the following cited information will demonstrate:

We now come to the matter of being loyal to Jehovah's visible organization. Certainly, we owe loyalty to it, including "the faithful and discreet slave," through which the Christian congregation is fed spiritually. (Matthew 24:45-47) Suppose that something appears in Watch Tower publications that we do not understand or agree with at the moment. What will we do? Take offense and leave the organization? That is what some did when *The Watch Tower*, many years ago, applied the new covenant to the Millennium. Others took offense at what *The Watchtower* once said on the issue of neutrality. If those who stumbled over these matters had been loyal to the organization and to their brothers, they would have waited on Jehovah to clarify these matters, which he did in his due time. Thus, loyalty includes waiting patiently until further understanding is published by the faithful and discreet slave.—*Watchtower*, March 15, 1996, pages 16-17

There are a *number* of arguable statements made in the paragraph. The first is that we do *not* "owe loyalty to it," as though the thing created is greater than the one creating it.

...even those who exchanged the truth of God for the lie and venerated and rendered sacred service to the creation rather than the One who created, who is blessed forever. Amen.—Romans 1:25 (NWT)

In addition, we are not to *owe* anybody *anything* except love; so, once again, the Society is overstepping its station by imposing requirements that exceed the Scriptures. (Romans 13:8; 1 Corinthians 4:6b-7—this latter scripture is as equally applicable to the Society as it is to the Witnesses against whom this scripture is enforced)

The next contentious statement is "Suppose that something appears in Watch Tower publications that we do not understand or agree at the moment. Take offense and leave the organization?" First, the suggestion seems to be that if there is any reason to disagree, it is only a "momentary" reason, but organizational history has proven that there have been (and continue to be) teachings and policies which have gone years and decades without any sort of correction or so-called "clarification" from the Society.

Next we find mentioned those who "took offense at what *The Watchtower* once said on the issue of neutrality." This is an interesting example for the Society to bring up to support their argument that loyalty is *owed* to the organization and the "faithful and discreet slave," because the incident mentioned took place in the relatively early years of the Watchtower organization, when several left the organization and became known as "Standfasters." [EndNote #3] This was even before the organization took the name "Jehovah's Witnesses" upon itself, during World War I. The *issue* was over the purchasing of war bonds in order to support the efforts in the war. Standfasters saw this as a breach of Christian neutrality, and the leaders of the Watchtower organization didn't.

So, when the matter was not given its proper and Bible-supported teaching, these individuals left the organization, refusing to either be a part of or support an organization which upheld such a blatantly incorrect policy. According to the Society, this was an act of disloyalty on the part of the Standfasters, and any reference to these ones in the literature is always mentioned in a negative light—even though they were *scripturally justified and correct in their understand*. The organization later adjusted its own view on the purchase of war bonds, but continues to downplay the false understanding by watering down the facts and saying that it was (merely) an issue that “was not fully appreciated by those then taking the lead.” (*Watchtower*, October 1, 1984, page 22)

Did the Standfasters leave as soon as this incorrect view was published? There is absolutely no indication of this anywhere to be found. It appears that there was a period of time that the issue was argued—and when it appeared that the Watchtower organization’s leaders would not accept the Bible’s teaching on Christian neutrality, the Standfasters parted ways, refusing to continue to be a party to the error. Rather than making the issue about the rightness of the Standfasters, the Society now derails their stance as an act of disloyalty—that they should have remained a part of the organization, under compulsion to accept and promote an unscriptural teaching, until the leaders of the organization decided to change their mind.

But is this the sort of loyalty we are to have as Christians? Is this the sort of loyalty that Jehovah or Jesus approves of?

The next argument made by the Society in the paragraph is that it is folly to “leave the organization” over matters which involve remaining loyal to truth or loyal to the utterances of mere men. But this is simply another way of perpetuating the myth that has held Witnesses captive to “the concept” ever since J. F. Rutherford took the helm of the Watchtower organization. By skewing Peter’s words at John 6:68, where the disciple said “**Lord, *whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life,***” the Society has managed to subtly create in the minds of Witnesses worldwide that what this *means* and what we should understand Peter to have said is “*Where else shall we go away to?*”—making it an issue of a *place* rather than the Person. For the Witness who has been a part of the organization for any length of time, there is simply nowhere else one can go and still have Jehovah’s approval. One *must* be a part of the Watchtower organization, the modern-day “ark of salvation.” If you *leave*, you have no hope remaining, no chance of survival. For those who are disfellowshipped for taking a stand for truth in light of Society error, too bad! “You should have kept your mouth shut, but since you didn’t—hope you enjoy the view from the outside,” is the impression such ones are left with. Further examination of this myth must be done in an upcoming article.

The Society then proceeds to say that these ones are “stumbled” in their thinking, yet never address *who* it was that stumbled them. The fault is made to appear as that of the one stumbled, yet here again the Bible disagrees, as several verses demonstrate. Jehovah God always places the blame for one of his little ones being stumbled in their faith squarely on the shoulders of the one doing the stumbling. In the cases presented by the Society, the fault *is* the Society’s. In every known case where the topic of ones being stumbled in their faith concerning teachings of the Society, never once does the Society accept either responsibility or accountability in the matter. This seems to indicate that the same mindset that was presented in the 1950’s is still very much alive today:

Jehovah's visible organization can use you, but can get along without you too. But you cannot get along without it. Fruitless ones are eventually pruned off and never missed as new ones are grafted in. Pruned-off branches soon wither and die, being cut off from the circulating, life-giving sap. Likewise, if a hand or foot is cut from the human body the severed member perishes, or if it is kept inactive in a cramped position it goes to sleep, gets numb, loses its ability to move. The blood in which is the life fails to circulate to those parts, fails to bring in new food supplies and carry off waste matter. So it is with Jehovah's visible organization. All must associate together, get the life-giving spiritual food that God circulates to his people through the organization, get the new truths that take away old ideas and the admonition that keeps down queer personal ideas, all of which keeps us fresh and strong and active, seeing eye to eye and fighting shoulder to shoulder. Don't become a withered branch or a paralyzed foot. Don't amputate yourself from the organization and commit spiritual suicide.—*Watchtower*, January 15, 1950

What a stark contrast to the Bible's view on the value of the mere one in Jehovah's eye:

“What do YOU think? If a certain man comes to have a hundred sheep and one of them gets strayed, will he not leave the ninety-nine upon the mountains and set out on a search for the one that is straying? ¹³ And if he happens to find it, I certainly tell YOU, he rejoices more over it than over the ninety-nine that have not strayed. ¹⁴ Likewise it is not a desirable thing with my Father who is in heaven for one of these little ones to perish.—Matthew 18:12-14 (NWT)

Of course, it is up to the reader to decide whose view is more loving, more based upon the Christlike love that we are commanded to express. Of course, there is more to be said on this particular aspect of the problem that modern-day “Jehovah's Witnesses” face in their relationship with Jehovah God and discipleship of Jesus Christ, but such matters will have to be discussed in an upcoming article. For now, there remains the final part of the excerpted statement which needs to be discussed: the need to “wait on Jehovah to correct matters” and what this has to do with *loyalty*. .

“Wait on Jehovah to correct matters...”

Probably the most pervasive argument made by the Society when all else fails is that we demonstrate our loyalty to Jehovah God by waiting on Him to correct matters in “His visible organization.” That includes continuing to accept, adopt, and willingly promote teachings and/or policies promulgated by the Society, even when we personally believe the Society is scripturally in error. It is claimed that by this going along, right or wrong, we “show” Jehovah God our “loyalty.” But, as brought out earlier in this article, where would we be today if individuals did not stand up to the Roman Catholic Church, individuals such as Martin Luther and other Reformists? Where would we be today in being able to obtain our own copy of the Bible if those who published them in yesteryear had succumbed to the angry reproof of the churches of their day? The *truth* is that untold millions have died through the ages *because* they refused to “go along, right or wrong.” They took a stand for *righteousness* and for *justice*, and to this day, even the Society applauds such ones' efforts and martyrdom—yet tolerates no rivalry from those who would do the same in our day in the face of error and false teachings where the Society

has fallen into these things. And while the Society writes off such people after casting them “from the synagogues,” Jehovah remembers such ones and the love they have for His ways and laws.

Does loyalty *require* that we promote error or even share in it? The Society would have us believe so. The Society has even gone so far as to all-but-say that this is how Jehovah tests our faith and loyalty to Him—by continuing to support the “faithful and discreet slave” even when a wrong teaching is in place and yet continuing to submit and obey to the Society’s leadership. Such ideas are myths created in the mind of those who search for justification to “teach commands of men as doctrines.” (Matthew 15:9, NWT) And it is promoted under the guise of “waiting on Jehovah,” a teaching which has become as much a part of Witness theology as “1914” and “increased light.”

What does it mean, after all, to “wait on Jehovah?”

Every Bible-examining Christian knows that Jehovah has purposed a day in which to judge the earth and those dwelling in it. So, we “wait on Jehovah” in this respect, making sure that while we recognize that as being the time of our deliverance, that we do not also develop a *craving* for it. (Amos 5:18-19)

We also “wait on Jehovah” when it comes to matters of clearing up all the other troubles that inundate this system of things, including the imprisonment of Satan and the removal of wickedness.

But are we supposed to “wait on Jehovah” to change the mind of the Society? More to the point of this discussion, does “waiting on Jehovah” actually involve our personally promoting teachings which run contrary to Bible truth—even if only due to our personal understanding? Is there a scriptural precedent for Christians to promote *known false teachings* when directed to do so by those claiming to have authority over the body of believers, such as the “faithful and discreet slave” claims today?

To date, this writer has been unable to find a single Biblical precedent where Christians have the authority to command other Christians to promote false teachings, even to retain so-called “organizational unity.” And while the Society and “Jehovah’s Witnesses” alike try to point to examples such as the apostles having wrong ideas about the arrival and implementation of the kingdom, or even that John, one of the apostles, would not die before Christ’s return—these fail to provide any proof that although some believed these things that they had also compelled others to adopt the same view, such as the Society does today with its teachings. In fact, the *only* instance of some compelling others to adopt a specific teaching was when the men from Jerusalem came to Paul’s territory and were insisting on the circumcision issue being adhered to—and that issue was eventually settled where it began: at Jerusalem. A letter was sent out to the congregations that *no further burden* was approved for Christians *beyond* four things: abstain from things sacrificed to idols, abstain from blood, abstain from things strangled, and abstain from fornication. (Acts 15:28-29) Today, of course, the requirements do *not* stop here, for every denomination now requires its adherents to accept and adopt dozens if not hundreds of religious precepts meant to keep the walls up between Christian denominations. “Jehovah’s Witnesses” are most certainly included in this miscarriage of Scripture:

Approved association with Jehovah’s Witnesses requires accepting the entire range of the true teachings of the Bible, including those Scriptural beliefs that are unique to Jehovah’s Witnesses.—*Watchtower*, April 1, 1986, page 31

By saying that “approved association” requires even those beliefs that are “unique to Jehovah’s Witnesses,” this by definition includes even those beliefs which are in error but are currently promoted by the Society. The article goes on to say:

Following such Scriptural patterns, if a Christian (who claims belief in God, the Bible, and Jesus) unrepentantly promotes false teachings, it may be necessary for him to be expelled from the congregation. (See Titus 3:10, 11.) Of course, if a person just has doubts or is uninformed on a point, qualified ministers will lovingly assist him.—*Watchtower*, April 1, 1986, page 31

The expression “false teachings” is actually in reference to promoting teachings which run counter to the Society’s current teachings. By way of illustrating the point, can it really be said that if a Christian promotes a certain Bible teaching as being more scripturally supported or accurate than the one offered by the Society, and that Christian is expelled from the congregation—yet the Society later adopts that *same* teaching and subsequently presents it as “new light,” did the Society adopt the “false teaching” of the Christian that was expelled? Similarly, is acknowledgment given that the Society causing the Christian to be expelled from the congregation was, in fact, an error, and an apology rendered? Most certainly not, because when this happens, the *reason* offered for the person to remain expelled is because they “ran ahead of Jehovah” on matters instead of “waiting on Jehovah.” And until that Christian admits that they “ran ahead of Jehovah,” that the *fault* is actually their own, not the Society’s, the Christian will not be received back into his congregation—even though he was scripturally correct and loyally obeyed God’s Word rather than obeying men.

The issue, then, is not so much in praying that Jehovah will open the eyes of the Society when it comes to teachings which clearly are in error to the Christian, but in trying to figure out what one should personally do until that time arrives, especially in a system of worship that tolerates only *one* interpretation of the Bible: the Society’s. As Witnesses, the only opinion we can present to others—even to each other—is the opinion of the Society. When we go out in the field ministry, we are to present the Society’s teachings, even if we personally are not in agreement with them. When we stand at someone’s door and the Witness that is accompanying us tells the householder something which we personally do not feel to be the right understanding, we stand mutely by.

But is this *loyalty*? And if so, to *whom*? It most certainly can’t be loyalty to Jehovah God, since the scriptures tell us that when we know what is right, and yet do not do it, we have transgressed against Jehovah. (James 4:17) The scriptures tell us that when we behold a brother taking a false step, we have an obligation to readjust that brother, and this surely includes false *teachings*, does it not? (Galatians 6:1) Out of an unbalanced sense of “loyalty,” we stand mute when others promote error, hiding behind such grandiose ideas as “I’m doing it to maintain unity in the congregation,” “I don’t want to appear to be going against Jehovah’s arrangement,” “It won’t make a difference anyhow,” “Jehovah will make it known in His time anyhow.”

This last misconception is interesting, in that throughout history, Jehovah has used humans to chastise the religious leaders, through the Judges, the Prophets, Jesus Christ, and even the Apostles. If we remain silently in objection to what we know are wrong teachings, we are shirking what every Christian has done who has found themselves in a similar situation in times past—even to the point of death. We have

allowed our fear of men to override our sense of loyalty to truth and justice. Interestingly, some who have found themselves unable to remain silent on matters yet do not take up matters with their local congregation's elders, take to the internet to share their views. The internet has become a turbulent ocean of variant views, certainly, but for some Witnesses, being able to share their "private views" anonymously on the internet allows them an opportunity to at least vent. But, again, is this an act of loyalty? Or is it hypocrisy to, while in one's offline life *appear* in agreement with the Society, and while online, demonstrate quite a different personality? It is not for the writer of this article to decide such matters, and these aspects are only mentioned as food for thought.

The fact of the matter is that our current system of worship has become tyrannical and it's caused not only individuals to be stumbled in their faith, but also caused brothers and sisters who are otherwise exemplary in their faith and service to Jehovah God to hide precious truths we should be enjoying at this time yet cannot because the Society wields a heavy hand over the organization and refuses to accept the possibility that Jehovah would reveal any of His truths to somebody not a part of the "faithful and discreet slave." The Society detests those who would challenge the body of teachings that we are out on the frontline promoting as "truth." It has become easier to expel those who would put those teachings to the test than to realize that the teachings *are wrong*.

And thus the use of "loyalty" as a last-resort. It is held over our heads as an unwieldy, blunt sword, ready to come crashing down if we but let it. If you want to prove you're loyal to Jehovah, then you'll do what we say, when we say, and however often we tell you to do it. You'll teach others what we want you to teach, whether you can personally vouch for it or not. Refuse, and you're obviously the one who is disloyal. You're the one who has a problem with authority. You're the one who wants to have their own following and start your own religion.

But the *reality* is that it *is* about our loyalty. The only question we need to be able to answer is *loyalty to whom?* When the Word of God and the understandings of men part ways, who do we cling to?

Once we've answered that question, it then becomes an issue on what we personally should do. Should we *leave* the organization? If not, what can we expect by staying? These are just some of the issues that will be examined in the next article.

--January 1, 2004

EndNotes:

1. The Society has frequently explained that acting in the role of a “prophet” does not necessarily mean that one utters new, infallible and inspired predictions concerning the future, but can also be applied to those who make known or pronounce Jehovah’s judgments. As an example, notice the following citation:

None of us should want to be like these indecisive, unresponsive ones. Better it is to know now, rather than too late, that there is an authentic prophetic class of Christians among us, and to accept and act upon the Bible message, “not as the word of men, but, just as it truthfully is, as the word of God.” (1 Thess. 2:13) Those who wait undecided until what Jehovah’s Christian witnesses have been proclaiming ‘comes true’ “will also have to know that a prophet himself had proved to be in the midst of them.” (Ezek. 33:33) But such belated knowledge will not mean salvation for them, for it will find their hearts and their ways to be unchanged. (*Watchtower*, March 1, 1973, p. 150)

It is this writer’s opinion that this is an appropriate usage of the term “prophet” in accordance with the Bible. This also argues *against* the claim of opposers that “Jehovah’s Witnesses” are “false prophets,” since such accusers are apparently unfamiliar with how prophets are used throughout the scriptures. (See Article, *Are Jehovah’s Witnesses “False Prophets”?*)

2. The expression “false teaching” is utterly disliked by “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” who prefer to use the expression “clarification” or “increased light.” Unfortunately, regardless of the *spin* we put on a changed teaching which was formerly taught as “truth,” the reality is that the former teaching was *not true*, and anyone that is found holding on to the former teaching would be accused of clinging to “false teachings” and failing to “keep pace with Jehovah’s visible organization.” Another disturbing fact is that when a teaching is changed, praise goes to Jehovah for having “increased the light” for “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” *even though the new teaching may later become changed back to the former view or replaced by yet another entirely different teaching!* In these cases, where, then, did the false teaching originate from? Jehovah? The Society does not say.

One more point to bring out is that when someone approaches the elders to explain that “false teachings” have been promulgated by the Society through the years, they are immediately reprimanded and, if the individual “persists,” they face being brought before a judicial committee and likely disfellowshipping. The expression “false teachings” or, worse still, “false *teachers*,” is clearly a label that is unacceptable to “Jehovah’s Witnesses,” in spite of accuracy of the term.

3. The name “Standfasters” was derived from their reading of the King James’ Version, Galatians 5:1, which mentions standing fast in the “liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.” (See *Watchtower*, July 15, 1964, page 443)