

POINT OF DECISION

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.
—Philippians 3:7, 8, *New International Version*.

BY THE end of 1979 I had arrived at my personal crossroads. I had spent nearly forty years as a full-time representative, serving at every level of the organizational structure. The last fifteen years I had spent at the international headquarters and the final nine of those as a member of the worldwide Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses.

It was those final years that were the crucial period for me. Illusion there met up with reality. I have since come to appreciate the rightness of a quotation I recently read, one made by a statesman, now dead, who said:

The great enemy of the truth is very often not the lie—deliberate, contrived and dishonest—but the myth—persistent, persuasive and unrealistic.

I now began to realize how large a measure of what I had based my entire adult life course on was just that, a myth—“persistent, persuasive and unrealistic.” It was not that my view toward the Bible had changed. If anything, my appreciation of it was enhanced by what I experienced. It alone gave sense and meaning to what I saw happening, the attitudes I saw displayed, the reasonings I heard advanced, the tension and pressure I felt. The change that did come was from the realization that my way of looking at the Scriptures had been from such an essentially sectarian viewpoint, a trap that I thought I had been protected against. Letting the Scriptures speak for themselves—without being first funneled through some fallible

human agency as a “channel”—I found they became immensely more meaningful. I was frankly astonished at how much of their import I had been missing.

The question was, what should I now do? My years on the Governing Body, the things I heard said in and out of sessions, the basic spirit I saw displayed, steadily brought me to the awareness that, as regards the organization, the ‘wineskin had grown old,’ had lost whatever flexibility it might have had, and that it was stiffening its resistance to any Scriptural correction either as to doctrinal beliefs or its methods of dealing with those who looked to it for guidance.¹ I felt, and still feel, that there were many good men on the Governing Body. In a long-distance phone call, a former Witness said to me, “We have been followers of followers.” Another said, “We have been victims of victims.” I think both statements are true. Charles Taze Russell followed the views of certain men of his time, was victimized by some of the myths they propagated as “revealed truth.” Each successive part of the organizational leadership has followed along, at times contributing additional myth in support of, or in elaboration of, the original myth. In place of rancor, I feel only compassion for those men I know, for I too was such a “victim of victims,” a “follower of followers.”

Though each year on the Governing Body, particularly from 1976 onward, became increasingly difficult and more stressful for me, I clung to the hope that things would improve. In time I was obliged to recognize that that was a hope which the evidence did not support.

I was not opposed to authority. I was opposed to the extremes to which it was carried. I could not believe that God ever purposed for men to exercise such all-pervading authoritarian control over the lives of fellow members of the Christian congregation. My understanding was that Christ grants authority in his congregation only to serve, never to dominate.²

Similarly, I did not object to “organization” in the sense of an orderly arrangement, for I understood the Christian congregation itself to involve such an orderly arrangement.³ But I believed that, whatever the arrangement, its purpose and function, its very existence, was only as an aid for the brothers; it was there to serve their interests, not the other way around. Whatever the arrangement, it was to build men and women up so that they would not be spiritual babes, dependent on men or on an institutionalized system, but able to act

1 Compare Jesus’ words at Luke 5:37-39.

2 Matthew 20:25-28; 23:8-12; 2 Corinthians 4:5; 1 Peter 5:3.

3 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 25; 14:40.

as full-grown, mature Christians. It was not to train them to be simply conformists to a set of organizational rules and regulations, but to help them to become persons “having their perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong.”⁴ Whatever arrangement there was, it must contribute toward a genuine sense of brotherhood, with the freeness of speech and mutual confidence true brotherhood brings—not a society composed of the few who are the governors and the many who are the governed. And finally, whatever the arrangement, the way to ‘take the lead’ therein must be by example, by holding firmly to the Word of God, passing on and inculcating the instructions of the Master the way he gave them, not “adjusting” these to fit what seemed to be in the interests of a humanly created organization, not by ‘making people feel the weight of one’s authority’ in the way the great men of the world do.⁵ It must result in the exaltation of Christ Jesus as the Head, never in the exaltation of an earthly authority structure and its officers. As it was, I felt that the role of Christ Jesus as active Head was overshadowed and virtually eclipsed by the authoritarian conduct and constant self-commendation and self-praise of the organization.

Furthermore, I did not deny the value and need for teaching. But I could not accept that organizational interpretations, based on shifting human reasonings, could ever be made equal in authority to the actual statements found in God’s unchangeable Word. The great importance given to traditional views, the bending and slanting of God’s Word to accommodate it to those views, and the inconsistencies that resulted in double standards were a source of serious emotional upset to me. What I found unacceptable was, not teaching, but dogmatism.

The convictions I held I tried to reflect during my years of service on the Governing Body. From the beginning I found that this brought me difficulty, animosity. In the end it brought rejection, expulsion.

In the autumn of 1979 I had an assignment to go on a “zone visit” to certain branch offices in West Africa. Some were in countries where the government had placed an official ban on the activity of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Knowing how easily something could happen that might result in my being detained, possibly imprisoned, I felt an obligation to discuss some of my concerns with my wife. (In view of her previous health problems, including a blood condition that nearly caused her death in 1969, I felt it best to make the trip alone.) Though she could not help but be aware of the emotional strain I felt,

4 Hebrews 5:14; 1 Corinthians 8:9; 16:13, 14.

5 Matthew 20:25.

I had never discussed with her the actual circumstances that produced that strain, what the real issues were that affected me. I had not felt free to do so. Now I felt not only that it was proper but that I had an obligation to consider with her what I had become aware of, particularly in the light of the Scriptures. How could I let men hold me back from discussing with my own wife truths that I saw in the Word of God?

By that time we concluded that the advisable course for us was to terminate our activity at the international headquarters. We felt that our peace of mind and heart, as well as our physical health, required it. We also had faint hopes that it might yet be possible to have a child and we had, in fact, talked to two doctors about this, including one of the staff doctors, Dr. Carlton, on a confidential basis.⁶ I was fifty-seven and I knew that it would be very difficult to find secular employment due to that factor. But I trusted that somehow things would work out.

The decision was not easy. I felt torn between two desires. On the one hand, I felt that by remaining on the Body at least I could speak up on behalf of others' interests, on behalf of the truth of the Scriptures, on behalf of moderation and balance, even though my voice was heard with irritation or ignored. I sensed that the time-span in which I could do that was rapidly shortening, that whatever voice I had in Governing Body discussions would soon be shut out, silenced. The desire to be free from the suspicious atmosphere I saw developing, to be free from participation in an authority structure I could not Scripturally defend and decisions I could not morally condone, weighed equally heavy with me.

If security and comfort were my aim, I certainly would have opted for staying where I was, for all our physical needs would have been provided us as part of the headquarters staff. Our long years of "seniority" would give us the choice of some of the better rooms that periodically became available in the Society's many large buildings.⁷ Our vacation time would increase to the equivalent of some six weeks a year and, because of being a Governing Body member, it would always be possible to combine this with speaking engagements that carried one to points all over the United States and Canada, or with zone visits that took one to points all over the earth. (Governing Body members can regularly take their vacations in places the average

6 My wife is thirteen years younger than I. We recognized the risks the doctors brought to our attention but were willing to face these.

7 The Society had not long before purchased the fifteen-story Towers Hotel, complementing other ten-story residences already owned in the Brooklyn Heights area. Since then the Society has purchased (through agents) the Standish Arms Hotel and the Bossert Hotel, both in Brooklyn, as well as erecting a new 30-story residential building in the area.



Former hotels
now owned by
Watch Tower



Personal room at headquarters

person could only afford to dream about.) In 1978, my wife and I found ourselves boarding planes over fifty times in that one year, and over the years we had traveled to Central and South America, Asia, Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

If prestige or prominence were what was sought, I could not reasonably have asked for more. I was already declining, on a monthly basis, about three or four invitations for speaking engagements for every one that I accepted. Internationally, if traveling to Paris, Athens, Madrid, Lisbon, Mexico City, Sao Paulo, or almost any other major city, it was only necessary to advise the Branch Office and a meeting would be arranged to which thousands of Jehovah's Witnesses would flock. It became almost commonplace to address audiences ranging in size anywhere from five thousand up to thirty thousand persons. Practically anywhere a Governing Body member goes he is the guest of honor among his fellow Witnesses.⁸



Speaking in Madrid

As for the Governing Body itself, it was quite evident to me that esteem from one's peers on the Body could be assured simply by regularly voicing total support for the organization and, with rare exceptions, by noting which way the majority inclined in discussions

⁸ I found Jesus' words at Matthew 23:6 brought to mind by all this.

and speaking and voting that way. I am not being cynical in saying this. Those few others on the Body who on occasion felt compelled to voice conscientious objections to certain traditional positions, policies or teachings, know—even if they do not express it—that this is so.

Even as it was, I had been assigned to membership on what might be called two of the more influential Governing Body committees, the Writing Committee and the Service Committee. The Writing Committee saw fit to assign me to oversee the development (not to do the actual writing thereof) of a number of publications printed eventually in many languages in the millions of copies.⁹

The “formula,” if it may be called that, for maintaining a position of prominence in the organization was easily discernible. But I could not find it conscientiously acceptable.

I would have had to have been blind not to have seen that my expressions on certain issues, motivated by what I felt were clear Scriptural principles, did not please many on the Body. There were times when I went to Governing Body sessions having decided simply not to speak rather than see animosity build. But when issues arose that could seriously affect the lives of people, I found I could not hold back from making some expression. I would have felt guilty not to have done so. I had no illusions that what I said would carry particular weight—in fact I knew from experience that it would more probably only make my own situation more difficult, more precarious. But I felt that if I did not stand for something, for certain principles that I felt were crucial to Christianity, then there was no purpose in being there, for that matter, not much real purpose in life.

It has been mentioned that from about 1978 onward a changed climate began to manifest itself in the Body. The initial euphoria that accompanied the dramatic change in the administration had faded. The spirit of brotherly “comradeship” that seemed to prevail for a time, along with its accompanying expressions of moderation, greater flexibility in viewpoint, had also noticeably diminished. The members had settled into their respective positions on the various Committees and after a time there seemed to be some “muscle flexing” shown on the part of certain ones. Fairly discernible lines began to be evident

9 These included the books *Is This Life All There Is?* (actual writing by Reinhard Lengtät); *Life Does Have a Purpose* (by Ed Dunlap); *Making Your Family Life Happy* (written principally by Colin Quackenbush); *Choosing the Best Way of Life* (by Reinhard Lengtät); and *Commentary on the Letter of James* (by Ed Dunlap). At the time of resigning I was assigned to oversee the development of a book on the life of Jesus Christ that Ed Dunlap was assigned to write.

within the membership, so that it was often not difficult to foresee what the vote was likely to be on an issue.

If, for example, the hands of Milton Henschel, Fred Franz, Ted Jaracz and Lloyd Barry went up, one could *generally* be sure that the hands of Carey Barber, Martin Poetzinger, William Jackson, George Gangas, Grant Suiter and Jack Barr would go up as well. If the hands of the former stayed down, the hands of the latter would generally stay down also. Some others would *likely* vote with these but their vote was not as predictable. With rare exceptions, this pattern prevailed.

The pattern held particularly true if any traditional policy or position was under discussion. One could know beforehand those members who would almost certainly vote in favor of maintaining that traditional policy and against any change therein. Even in the case of the “alternative service” issue, already discussed in a previous chapter, though here outnumbered, these members were still able to prevent a two-thirds majority vote from altering the position on that issue.

In certain controversial cases there seemed to be at least some evidence of “lobbying” on the part of some members. I felt that if anyone wanted to present information apart from the actual session, the better way was to put it in writing and submit copies to all members. Then at least everyone heard the same thing and, in effect, the ‘cards were all on the table.’ But such written submissions were usually quite rare and, when made, were seldom discussed to any extent.

The Governing Body session of November 14, 1979, was, I believe, a precursor of the traumatic events that violently shook the headquarters in the spring of 1980, resulting in a number of members of the staff being disfellowshipped for “apostasy,” and also my own resignation from the Body and from the headquarters staff.

That day we handled four minor issues; each motion carried unanimously. Any sense of harmony that might have existed was quickly broken by a jarring note, however. Grant Suiter said he wished to bring up a matter about which he stated there was “considerable gossip.” He said that he had heard reports that some members of the Governing Body and the Writing Department had given talks in which they made comments not in accord with Society teaching and that this was causing confusion. He had also heard, he said, that within the headquarters family staff some were making expressions such as, “When King Saul dies then things will change.”¹⁰

10 Presumably the reference was to the corporation president (Fred Franz), some apparently believing (mistakenly so) that the presidency still represented the power base it had occupied up until 1976.

I had never heard anyone in the headquarters family make such a remark. Grant Suiter did not say where he obtained his information or who was the source of the “gossip” he referred to, but he became very intense and both his words and facial expressions reflected strong and heated emotion. And, for the first time, the term “apostasy” surfaced in a Governing Body session.

Considerable discussion followed, with most members indicating they were hearing such things for the first time. In my own expression, I stated that I had given talks all over the United States and in many countries and that in not one of them had I ever made statements contradicting published teachings of the organization. It was rare that talks by a Governing Body member would not be taped by at least someone and, had anything out of line been said, the evidence would be there. In that case, I pointed out, the Body would surely not have to rely on rumor to know about it, for someone would certainly write in about it, asking questions. I asked if Grant Suiter knew personally of any such case on the part of any member of the Body or of the Writing Department? His comment was simply that ‘these matters were being talked about,’ and that some Branch Committee members attending seminars at the headquarters had said they were “confused” because they had heard some conflicting views from those conducting classes.

The decision was that the Teaching Committee (which had oversight of the seminars) should investigate. At a later session, they reported that they had found no evidence of the things spoken of, that the only “confusion” among the Branch men was about a point developed in a class conducted by Governing Body member Carey Barber. He dealt with Christ’s kingdom having commenced in 33 C.E. upon his ascension to heaven and some had difficulty in reconciling this with the teaching about 1914.¹¹ The resolution of the matter was an agreement that all Governing Body members would exercise care when speaking on assignments; it was clearly stated in the session, however, that this did not imply any attempt to control private conversations by the members, as among personal friends. This latter stand did not hold up under test.

I found the discussion significant. Although Grant Suiter had not indicated knowing of any case where a Governing Body member had, when on assignment, made comments contrary to published teachings, I knew that some could have been cited. The Body had already

11 The official teaching is that upon his ascension Christ began ruling as king toward his congregation only; that in 1914 he took full power to reign toward all the earth.

considered the occasion of Albert Schroeder's visit to some European branches and his advancing the view that the expression "this generation" might have a meaning different from the published one. Word had reached us about this from more than one place. It was also known that the president, Fred Franz, had introduced a new view regarding the "keys of the kingdom" (referred to at Matthew, chapter sixteen, verse 19) when teaching certain classes in the Gilead School, a view that contradicted published teachings of the organization. This had been done without previous consultation with the Body and the view was presented, not as a suggestion, but as the *correct* view.¹² Entire classes of Gilead graduates went to their assignments with this new view that none of the rest of the brotherhood had even heard about.

None of these cases were brought up in the Governing Body session, however, and I felt no inclination to do so.¹³ But I sensed that a definite undercurrent was running that sooner or later would come into the open. And I had no doubt that when it did its force would be directed, not against any such persons, but against myself and, outside the Body, Edward Dunlap.

Due to the sentiment that I could discern on the part of several members, I had already been weighing the advisability of resigning from the Service Committee, thus limiting my participation in committee membership to just the Writing Committee. One day in conversation with Robert Wallen, who acted as secretary for the Service Committee (not himself a Governing Body member), I mentioned that I had about decided to drop off that committee.¹⁴ His response was, "You can't do that. There has to be some balance on the committee." He urged me to change my mind.

However, the same adverse sentiment expressed in the November 14, 1979, session, surfaced in another session and, as I had thought, I now came in for specific mention. In the course of the session, Lloyd Barry, who had the responsibility of seeing that each issue of the *Watchtower* magazine was put together and ready for publishing, voiced strong concern over the fact that I had not placed my initials on a considerable number (he gave the number) of *Watchtower* articles

12 Eventually this came before the Body and, after much debate, was finally approved (*not* unanimously) and published in the *Watchtower* of October 1, 1979, pages 16-29.

13 At a meeting (in Chicago I believe) of witness attorneys and doctors, another Governing Body member, Grant Suiter, had invited them to express themselves as to the rightness of the Society's then current position on the use of the term "ordained minister." Though no open statement of disagreement was expressed at that meeting by him, he had made such before the Body, and the response that followed his invitation indicated clearly that those hearing it felt free to criticize that current position.

14 The other Committee members then were Ted Jaracz (Coordinator), Milton Henschel, Albert Schroeder, William Jackson and Martin Poetzinger.

circulated in the Writing Committee. (Each article due to be published was first circulated among the five committee members and their initials written at the top indicated approval.) While not understanding his reason for bringing the matter up in a full session, rather than speaking first to me privately or at a Writing Committee meeting, I acknowledged that what he stated was true. (I was actually surprised to hear the exact number of articles I had not signed since I had kept no count; he had.)

I explained that I had not signed in those cases simply because I could not do so conscientiously. At the same time I had made no effort whatsoever to impede the publication of the particular articles (some of them being articles written by the president on the prophecy of Jeremiah and laying much stress on the 'prophetic role' of the organization and on certain dates, such as 1914 and 1919), nor had I made any effort to create an issue of the matter. The absence of my initials represented abstention, not opposition. I stated before the entire Body that if this was viewed as a problem, if having someone refrain from signing for conscientious reasons was viewed as undesirable, then there was a simple solution. They could appoint someone else to serve on the Writing Committee who would not feel such conscientious restraint about approving material. I mentioned at that time my thoughts about resigning from the Service Committee so as to spend more time contributing to the needs of the Writing Department. So I placed the matter in their hands and made it clear that whatever disposition they chose to make would be acceptable to me.

After the session, Lyman Swingle, then the Coordinator of both the Writing Committee and the Writing Department, spoke to me in his office and said: "You can't do that to me. If they decide on their own to replace you on the Writing Committee, all right. But *don't you offer to resign.*" He spoke with considerable force. I told him I was simply leaving it up to the Body, but that I was tired of controversy and would be happy for anything that would lessen some of the strain I felt. He repeated his urging.

The Body made no change in my assignment.

Nonetheless I had a strong presentiment of trouble brewing. But I had no way of knowing that within six months I would find myself in the midst of a storm of near fanatical intensity, with the Governing Body reacting with harsh measures to what it viewed as a "conspiracy" of serious proportions, one that threatened the very heart of the organization. Consider, now, what this "dangerous conspiracy" actually was, just how "massive" its proportions were, how great the "criminality" of those involved was, what the justification was for the state of "siege

mentality” that developed within the organization and which continues to this day, the events that led up to the “purge” in the spring of 1980.

The day before I took off for Paris on the first leg of my trip to West Africa (November 16, 1979), the Society’s president, Fred Franz, was presiding at the morning Bible text discussion (that being his week to serve as chairman). In his comments, he stated that some were questioning the Society’s position (set forth in a recent *Watchtower*) that Jesus Christ is the mediator only for the “anointed” ones and not for the other millions of Jehovah’s Witnesses.¹⁵ He said of such ones:

They would merge everyone together and make Jesus Christ the mediator for every Tom, Dick and Harry.

I could not help but think of all the Toms and Dicks and Harrys there present in the headquarters family and wondered how those words would sound to them. I knew that there was considerable discussion within the family on this subject, some of it definitely unfavorable.

The president went on to affirm that the Society’s teaching was right. The one text he referred to in Scripture was Hebrews, chapter twelve, and the words:

It is for discipline you are enduring. God is dealing with you as sons. For what son is he that a father does not discipline? But if you are without the discipline of which all have become partakers, you are really illegitimate children, not sons.

He then gave the illustration of a horse whose master uses discipline to teach it to walk around in a circle and he stated, “Sometimes it may take a few lashes with the whip to get it to do this.” He urged anyone who had doubts about the Society’s teaching on this point to hold on, take the discipline and “show that he has the *guts* to stick with it!”¹⁶

That evening I took off for Paris but for days I felt sickened, not merely by these words, but by the whole approach and spirit I had been witness to for the last few years. For me it was evident from Scripture that Jesus Christ did offer his mediation to bring about reconciliation with God for every Tom, Dick and Harry and that his laying down his life for all persons, his providing the ransom sacrifice and making its benefits available to any and all who might choose to accept them, was the very opposite of the attitude expressed in that headquarters discussion. It seemed that we were hearing “a different good news,” not the good news as it was presented by the inspired writers of the first century.

¹⁵ See the *Watchtower* of April 1, 1979, p. 31; November 15, 1979, pp. 21-27.

¹⁶ Ed Dunlap’s comment on this afterward was, “I always thought that what enabled us to endure was faith, not ‘guts’.”

In Africa, the next-to-the-last country I visited was Mali. Most of the missionaries there were French nationals. After working my way through a presentation in French of some points I was covering with missionaries in each country, I asked if they had any questions. The second question presented was, “The *Watchtower* says that Jesus is the mediator only for the anointed, not for the rest of us. Can you clear this up for us? Not even in prayer is he our mediator?”

If it had been my interest to sow doubts, this would have been an obvious opportunity.

Instead I tried to calm them, pointing to the First Letter of John, chapter two, verse 1, which speaks of Jesus as the “Helper” of those for whom he is a “propitiatory sacrifice for sins,” including those of “the whole world.” I said that even if they were not to think of Jesus



“Witnessing” in Africa

as their Mediator, they could surely think of him as their Helper. And, that of one thing they could be sure: that his interest in them was as great as his interest in any other persons on earth.

I felt that I had managed to keep the matter from becoming a serious issue with them, and I had said nothing that in any way placed in question the *Watchtower’s* statements.

However, a few days later, on going to the airport to depart for Senegal, the missionaries came out to see me off. One of the women missionaries approached and asked me, “But not even in prayer is Jesus our mediator?” I could do nothing but repeat and reemphasize basically the same points I had presented earlier in their missionary home meeting.

I returned to Brooklyn after about three weeks, the only difficulty encountered in Africa being the derailment of the train on which I was making a twenty-hour, overnight trip from Ouagadougou, Upper Volta, to Abidjan in the Ivory Coast.



Locomotive of derailed train

Upon my return, the following morning at the breakfast table a visiting Branch Committee member and his wife were seated next to me. Breakfast had barely begun when the wife wanted to know if she could ask me a question. I replied, “You can ask it. I don’t know if I can answer it.” She said that the previous night they had attended the study of a *Watchtower* dealing with the mediatorship of Christ, and she then asked virtually the same question that the French missionary in Mali had asked. I gave the same answer.

That weekend, I went to New Jersey on a speaking assignment and following the talk a woman in the audience came up (an active Witness) and said she had some questions. There were three questions and the second was about Christ’s mediatorship. Once again I gave the same response.

These incidents are cited because they represent my standard practice when questions arose from such persons, questions involving published teachings of the organization. Any question as to the Scriptural backing for the organization’s teachings that I myself had, I discussed only with personal acquaintances of long association, every one of them (in the case of men) being elders. Up until 1980, aside from my wife I do not believe there were more than four or five persons on earth who knew to any real extent the concerns I had, and none of these knew all the reasons that caused these concerns. It would have taken a book such as this for them to have known that.

I had not the slightest doubt, however, that many, many others among Jehovah’s Witnesses had a number of the same concerns that I did.¹⁷ From my years on the Governing Body I saw no evidence that those concerns would be frankly faced or given the consideration they merited by means of careful, thorough research of the Scriptures, and decided, not on the basis of traditional views long held, but on the basis of the Biblical proof or lack of it.

The evidence pointed instead to the conclusion that any open discussion of these difficulties was viewed as a great danger to the organization, as disloyal to its interests. Unity (actually uniformity) was apparently counted more important than truth. Questions about organizational teachings could be discussed within the inner circle of the Governing Body but nowhere else. No matter how heated the debate

17 One day a longtime member of the Service Department approached me, raising a question about an article written by the president. I said I could not answer for the article and suggested he write in his query. He replied, “No, I did that before and got burned.” I said that unless people did write in no one would know their concerns. His response was, “If you really want to know how people feel about these articles, tell the Circuit and District Overseers to write in how they feel about some of the articles. But you must tell them NOT to sign their names, otherwise they’ll only write what they feel is wanted.” He said the same would be true if Bethel Elders were invited to write.

on an issue within that inner circle, the Body must present a face of unanimity toward all those on the outside, even though such “face” actually masked serious disagreement on the point in question.

I found nothing in the Scriptures to justify this pretense, for those Scriptures commended themselves as truthful by their very frankness, openness and candor in acknowledging the differences existing among early Christians, including apostles and elders. More importantly I found nothing in Scripture to justify the restricting of discussion to such a secretive, closed society of men, whose two-thirds majority decisions must then be accepted by all Christians as “revealed truth.” I did not believe that truth had anything to fear from open discussion, any reason to hide from careful scrutiny. Any teaching that had to be shielded from such investigation did not deserve to be upheld.

From the time of the writing of the reference work called *Aid to Bible Understanding*, I had had close association with Edward Dunlap. I first met him in 1964 when attending a ten-month course at Gilead School. He was then the Registrar of the School and one of its four instructors. Our class (the 39th) was composed of about one hundred persons, the majority of them men from Branch Offices. It can be truthfully stated that most of them considered Dunlap’s classes by far the most instructive as regards gaining understanding of the Scriptures.¹⁸ Originally from Oklahoma, of somewhat rough-hewn appearance, Ed was of ordinary education but had the ability to take very difficult, complex subjects and put them in understandable language, whether it was the functions of the Mosaic Law or a scientific study of genetics. However, more important to me was his unpretentiousness. Aside from a penchant for loud ties, he was a basically low-key, low-profile person, in appearance, demeanor and speech. No matter what responsibility was assigned him, he stayed the same person.

One incident that typified for me his personality was a remark he made to me in connection with a semestral exam. We were going through the various letters of Paul in our classes and each week there was an exam on points studied. Among the points there were generally questions about the likely time and place of writing for each letter. Taken one letter at a time this was not difficult to remember. But when time came for exams at the end of the semester, I realized that now we would have ALL the thirteen Pauline letters involved, and how to remember the different suggested times and places of writing

18 Lloyd Barry was also in this class and made such expression on more than one occasion while a Governing Body member. I doubt that any others of the students ever had any question as to Ed’s deep love for, and knowledge of, the Scriptures.

posed a fair-sized problem. They followed no chronological order in the Bible canon. I worked for a long time at it and finally came up with a mental system for recalling these.

The exam came, with a two-hour period for completing it. I finished somewhat early and on leaving the classroom I met Ed coming in. He asked, "How was it?" I replied, "Oh, it wasn't bad. But I'll never forgive you." He asked what I meant. I said, "I worked and worked and worked to develop a system for remembering the times and places of writing of each letter and then you didn't ask a *single* question on that." Taking my remark somewhat more seriously than it was intended, he said, "You know the reason I don't put questions on that in the semester exams? I can't keep that stuff in mind myself." There were four instructors for the school, Ulysses Glass, Bill Wilkinson, Fred Rusk and Ed Dunlap. I think it is fair to say that of the four only Ed would have made the reply he did. It was typical of his unassuming personality.



Edward Dunlap

He had always been thoroughly devoted to the organization; his full-time service record equalled mine in length. Another circumstance that tells something about him relates to an illness he developed in the late 1960s. Commonly called *tic douloureux* (a French term meaning "painful spasm"), the medical name for it is *trigeminal neuralgia*, the inflammation of a large, three-branched facial nerve that produces one of the most painful ailments known to humans. The stabbing, blinding pain can be provoked by anything, a slight breeze, a touch, anything that excites the nerve, and as the ailment worsens the victim can hardly do such ordinary things as comb his hair, brush his teeth, or eat, without risking an attack. Some so afflicted are driven to suicide.

Ed suffered with this for seven years, having some temporary remissions and then worsening. During this time, the president, Nathan Knorr, somehow acquired the opinion (based perhaps on others' comments) that this was something emotional on Ed's part, not genuinely of physical origin. One day he talked with Ed, questioning him about his married life and other matters in relation to this ailment. Ed assured him that that had absolutely nothing to do with the problem, that he could be thoroughly enjoying himself on vacation and yet the attacks could strike without warning. The president did not give any weight to Ed's explanation, however, and informed him that he had decided to send him over to the factory for a

while to give him more exercise. He was to work in the bindery department.

Ed was then in his sixties, for some time had been taking strong medication prescribed by the staff doctor designed to suppress the painful attacks, at times had been bedridden for days or a week with the ailment. But he was now sent to the bindery and was there assigned to feed a machine on the bindery line. He did this for months and quietly endeavored to make the best of this “theocratic” assignment. But as he confided to me, it made him realize for the first time the absolute control the organization exercised over his life. His attempts at explaining were ignored and, contrary to all good sense, he was placed in the least desirable situation for one with that kind of ailment.

It was some years later, when he was at the point of absolute despair, that he learned of a neurosurgeon in Pittsburgh who believed he had discovered the cause of this age-old ailment and had perfected microsurgery to remedy it. Ed had the operation (involving the removal of a portion of the skull and remedial operation in connection with the main artery to the brain, which artery runs parallel to the inflamed nerve). He was thus finally cured. He expected no apology from the organization for its serious error in judgment in its viewing and handling of his agonizing problem. He received none.

Since our places of work, both during the *Aid* project and thereafter, were never more than an office apart, we conversed regularly, sharing with each other any interesting items we came across in research. The Writing Committee of the Governing Body assigned us to work together on a number of projects, such as the *Commentary on the Letter of James*. In our conversations we did not always agree on all points, but this did not affect our friendship or mutual respect.

I mention all this because Edward Dunlap was one of the few persons who knew how deep my concerns ran as to what I saw in the organization and particularly within the Governing Body. He shared that concern. Like myself, he did so because he could not harmonize much of what he saw, heard and read with Scripture.

Though associated with the organization since the early 1930s, during most of that association he did not count himself as among the “anointed.” I was talking to him about this one day in the late 1970s, and he related that when he began associating in the 1930s the *Watch Tower* then taught that there were two classes who would inherit heavenly life: the “elect” (composed of the 144,000) and the “great company” (or “great crowd” of Revelation chapter seven). The “great company” were said to be Christians of *lesser faith* than the

elect and hence, though likewise destined for heavenly life, the “great company” would not be among those who would reign with Christ as kings and priests. Since, of the two classes, one was clearly superior and the other inferior, Ed typically assumed that he must be of the inferior class, the “great company.”

Came 1935 and Judge Rutherford, at the Washington D.C., assembly, announced the “revealed truth” that those of the “great company” were Scripturally destined to live, not in heaven, but on earth. As Ed stated, he had always had the hope of heavenly life, felt there could be nothing more wonderful than to serve in the presence of God and in company with his Son. But because of the announced change in organizational viewpoint, he subdued those hopes and accepted what he was told should be his hope as part of the “great company.”

It was not until 1979 that he clearly arrived at the decision that no human organization could change the invitation found in Scripture, as by setting a date for a change in the hope the Bible presented as open to any person embracing that hope, whether his name was Tom, Dick, Harry, or Ed. So, forty-four years after 1935 he began to partake of the emblems, the bread and the wine, at the Lord’s Evening Meal, something only the “anointed” among Jehovah’s Witnesses do.

When a Witness or any one else asks, “How does one know whether he or she is of the ‘anointed’ class with heavenly hopes?” the standard response is to refer to Paul’s statement at Romans, chapter eight, verses 16, 17:

The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit that we are God’s children. If, then, we are children, we are also heirs, heirs indeed of God, but joint heirs with Christ, provided we suffer together that we may also be glorified together.

The official teaching has been, and is, that only those of the 144,000 “anointed” can have such ‘witness of the spirit,’ and that this would tell them that they were of the select group of 144,000 who alone could hope for heavenly life. All others could only be classed as “prospective” children of God and their hopes must be earthly.

In reading the context, from the very start of the chapter, it was evident to Ed that the apostle Paul was indeed writing about two classes. But *not* two classes divided by their hope of either heavenly or earthly life in the future.

The two classes instead clearly were: those guided by God’s spirit, on the one hand, and those ruled by the sinful flesh, on the other.

The contrast the apostle set forth was not between hope of life in heaven or of life on earth, but between life and death themselves, between friendship with God or enmity with God. As verses 6 through 9 state:

For the minding of the flesh means death, but the minding of the spirit means life and peace; because the minding of the flesh means enmity with God, for it is not under subjection to God, nor, in fact can it be. So those who are in harmony with the flesh cannot please God.

However, you are in harmony, not with the flesh, but with the spirit, if God's spirit truly dwells in you. But if anyone does not have Christ's spirit, this one does not belong to him.

There was no question about heavenly or earthly life in Paul's discussion but simply whether one was living by God's spirit or was instead living according to the sinful flesh. Paul made it clear that it was one thing or the other: Either one had God's spirit and produced its fruitage or he was at enmity with God and did not belong to Christ. Without that spirit there could be no "life and peace," only death. If the person *did* have God's spirit, then he was a son of God, for Paul states (verse 14):

For all who are led by God's spirit, these are God's sons.¹⁹

As Ed noted, Paul says, not some, but "ALL who are led by God's spirit" are his sons, his children. Those led by that spirit would have the "witness" of the spirit to that effect, including the evidence of its fruitage in their lives, somewhat similar to the way the Bible says that Abel, Enoch, Noah and others had "witness borne to them" that they were pleasing to God.²⁰

The relevance of these points will become evident as later developments are considered.

Suffice it to say here, that Ed Dunlap shared with me the same basic concerns and particularly the concern over the dogmatism and authoritarian spirit being manifested. His view, like mine, was that human authority, when pushed beyond its proper limits, inevitably detracts from the role of Christ Jesus as Head of the congregation.

Not long after my return from Africa, a longtime friend came by our room at the headquarters. His name was René Vázquez and I had known him for about thirty years. I had first met him in Puerto Rico, in the town of Mayagüez where he lived with his father, who had remarried. René was then a high school student in his teens. Both his father and his father's wife strongly opposed René's studying with Jehovah's Witnesses. Their opposition became so intense that one evening, after having studied at the home of some Witness missionaries, René felt he could not endure any more. He spent the night on

¹⁹ Compare the apostle's use of the same phrase "led by the spirit" in a similar contrast between sinful flesh and God's spirit at Galatians 5:18, where it is stated that those "led by spirit" are "not under law." To deny that this applies to *all* Christians, rather than to a select group, would be to leave all the others still under law and law's condemnation.

²⁰ Hebrews 11:1-7.

a park bench in a public plaza. The following morning he went to the home of an uncle and aunt and asked to be allowed to live with them, to which they agreed. Though not in favor of Jehovah's Witnesses, they were tolerant people. Upon graduation from high school, René immediately took up full time "pioneer service."

Attending an assembly in New York in 1953, he decided to remain in the United States, married, and he and his wife "pioneered" together. They were invited into traveling work among Spanish congregations in the western United States, later attended Gilead School and were sent to Spain. René was soon assigned as District Overseer in that country. The work of Jehovah's Witnesses was under official ban and he and his wife traveled all over Spain, having to be on constant watch for the police and conscious of the danger of being discovered and arrested or deported. All meetings held were clandestine. After years of such "underground" activity, René's nerves had worn thin to the point of breaking. By now he and his wife had been in Spain seven years. Due to his health and some needs within his wife's family, they returned to the United States, paying their own way and arriving with virtually no funds.

On his return, the only job René could find was in a steel mill, lifting heavy loads. A small person, his frail frame gave way the second day, putting him in the hospital. He later found other work and once they had settled their financial problems, he and his wife were right back into "pioneer" service, then into Circuit and District work and finally were asked to become part of the Brooklyn headquarters staff where René was given supervision of the Service Desk caring for all the Spanish congregations in the United States, composed of about thirty thousand Witnesses. He served there until 1969 when his wife became pregnant, requiring them to give up their "Bethel service."

René told me he would try to remain in New York, not because he liked the city, but with the thought that, should his circumstances allow, he could be of some service to the headquarters organization. It turned out that way, and in a few years he was donating his time two days a week to help out, doing Spanish translation, directing the taping of Spanish-language dramas for conventions, as well as doing part-time Circuit and District Overseer work among the scores of Spanish congregations in the New York area. He had spent some time in Portugal and when Portuguese congregations developed, he brushed up on the language and served them also.

In his thirty some years of association with the organization, I seriously doubt that anyone in Puerto Rico, Spain or the United States

ever found cause for complaint about René's service. Of a quite gentle nature, he was at the same time a person of principle; he had learned the art, however, of being firm without being hard or harsh. Even given his later situation, which will be presented farther along, I doubt that any of those persons who worked with René Vázquez in any of the places he served would deny that the above is an honest assessment of him as a person. If he had a notable fault, it was, as he himself acknowledges, that he was perhaps too compliant when asked to do something for others, particularly by the Society. He feels today that his family life suffered unnecessarily because of this.

As one example, he and his wife had gone for some years without a true vacation and he had lined up a trip that would take them back to Spain for a visit. Shortly before the time arrived, Harley Miller, then the head of the Service Department, called and asked René to do some Circuit work at that particular time. René felt that the right thing to do was to accept, for he had never turned down an assignment from "the Lord's organization." His wife made the trip to Spain, accompanied by her mother.

René lived near La Guardia airport and members of the Service Department, Harley Miller among them, when traveling by plane on weekend speaking engagements, regularly arranged for René to meet them and transport them to Bethel on their return. Some of the flights arrived near midnight, others even later. René had insisted on providing such service for me and I had accepted on the basis of our long friendship, until I learned to what extent others were making use of his willingness to be helpful. To my mind, his good nature was imposed upon and, with rare exceptions, I sought other means of transportation thereafter.

I would think that if the view of the Governing Body were obtainable as to whom they would list as the principal figures in the "conspiracy against the organization" that they took such radical action to wipe out, they would point to us three—Ed, René and myself. Yet there was never an occasion when the three of us spent any time together. During the period involved I had extended conversations with René on perhaps two occasions; the same was true of Ed and René.

What were the supposedly sinister activities we engaged in? Simply this, we discussed the Bible as friends and with friends of long standing.

The night René came by our room, he had been attending a seminar for elders arranged by the Society. We discussed his impressions, which were basically favorable. At one point in the conversation, however, he said, "It seems to me as if we almost worship *figures*. Sometimes I wish we would do away completely with reports." By

reports he was referring to the system of having each Witness turn in report slips each month listing what “witnessing” activity was done, including hours spent, literature distributed, and so forth.²¹

I recalled some points made in the previous District Assembly program about “faith and works” and we talked about this and the apostle’s statements in Romans on the subject. As I saw it, the apostle’s teaching called first of all for building people up in faith; when that was done the works would follow—for genuine faith is productive and active in the same way that genuine love is. One can keep constantly at people to perform certain works and they may do this as a result of pressure. But where is the evidence that the works are generated by faith and love? And if not so motivated, how pleasing would they be to God anyway?

It seemed evident that deeds of faith had to be spontaneous, not systematized or made to conform to a certain mold, just as acts of love should be spontaneous, not something performed out of mere compliance with some scheduled activity programmed by others. Orderly arrangements are fine, but they should be for the purpose of convenience, not as a means of subtle compulsion, used to create a guilt complex in any not ‘fitting into the mold.’ The more closely men try to supervise the lives and activity of fellow Christians, the more they actually squeeze out the opportunity for faith and love to motivate and control. I acknowledged that it is more difficult and far harder work to build up people’s faith and appreciation through Scripture than simply to give “pep talks” or make people feel guilty, but, from what the apostle wrote, that harder way seemed to me to be the only Scripturally right and wise way.

That was the essence of the conversation. The subject of report slips sparked the conversation but thereafter did not figure therein. On meeting up with René in the lobby of one of the buildings sometime later, he said he found that approaching matters in the light of Paul’s writings in Romans made his Circuit and District Overseer work far more enjoyable, his discussion with elders more meaningful.

21 The importance given to these reports is undeniable. Every Witness reports to the congregation, every congregation reports to the Branch Office of their country, every Branch Office sends a detailed monthly report to the international headquarters where these monthly reports are compiled, averages are figured, percentages of increase are noted. They are studied with the same avid interest that a large corporation would study the figures of its production records, its business growth; any fluctuations or downward trends in the number of Witnesses reporting time, the hours reported or the distribution of literature, become causes for concern. Branch representatives become uneasy if the monthly reports for their country fail to show increase or, worse, show a decrease.

Some weeks later my wife and I went to his home for a meal. Though we two couples had been together in the same Spanish-speaking congregation in Queens, New York, during our first years in the city, since then our getting together had been quite sporadic. Both before and after the meal, René wanted to discuss the message of Romans. Though to a lesser degree than with my wife, I felt an obligation to respond to his questions rather than evade issues. I had known him for thirty years; I knew him to be a serious student of the Scriptures. I spoke to him as a friend, not as an organizational official, and in discussing the Word of God with him I felt my prime responsibility was to God, not to men, not to an organization. If I held back from speaking to persons like this on what I saw to be clear-cut teachings of Scripture, how could I say as Paul did in his words to the Ephesian elders, recorded at Acts, chapter twenty, verses 26 and 27:

I call you to witness this very day that I am clean from the blood of all men, for I have not held back from telling you all the counsel of God.

Paul knew that it was doing this that had resulted in his being spoken of injuriously within the synagogue of Ephesus.²² I knew, as well, that my speech could produce similar results.

Among other sections, we discussed the first portion of the eighth chapter of Romans (considered earlier in this chapter of this book). I was interested to know how he viewed verse 14, as to the sonship relation to God, when considered in the light of the context. He had never examined it contextually (as is probably true of practically all of Jehovah's Witnesses). When he did, his reaction was both spontaneous and stirring. What to others might seem obvious, can strike one of Jehovah's Witnesses as if it were a revelation. René's comment was, "For years I have had the feeling that I was resisting holy Spirit when reading the Christian Scriptures. I would be reading along and applying to myself everything I read, then suddenly I would stop and say, 'But these things do not apply to me, they apply only to the anointed.'"

I know, he knows and God knows that I used no persuasion to cause him to see matters differently. It was the apostle's own words in the Bible, read contextually, that did the persuading. His expression on a later incidental contact was that the Scriptures as a whole came alive with far greater meaning to him from that point forward.

Though it may seem strange, for one of Jehovah's Witnesses (not of the about 8,800 "anointed") to come to the conclusion that the

²² Acts 19:8, 9.

words found from Matthew to Revelation *are* directed to him and *do* apply, not merely “by extension,” but actually and directly, causes a door to open to a whole host of questions, questions that have often been longing for an answer but which did not dare to be asked.

When I review what has been done in recent times in an effort to uphold the organization’s interpretations, the manipulation of Scripture and fact, I can only feel grateful that I did not let concern for an organization’s favor hold me back from pointing at least some persons to the Scriptures on these points.

On March 4, 1980, I submitted a request to the Personnel Committee of the Governing Body for a leave of absence to extend from March 24 to July 24. My wife and I both felt that our health demanded an extended change. During that period I also hoped to investigate what possibility there was of finding employment and somewhere to live if we were to terminate our headquarters service. We had about \$600 in a savings account and a seven-year-old car as our major assets.

When attending District Assemblies in Alabama, we had previously met and become acquainted with a Witness named Peter Gregerson. Later he had invited us to visit Gadsden, Alabama, on a couple of occasions so that I could speak to the local congregations. Peter had developed a small chain of supermarkets in the Alabama-Georgia area. In 1978, when a “zone trip” took my wife and me as far as Israel, Peter and his wife joined us there and we spent parts of two weeks touring that Bible land.

At that time Peter expressed serious concern about the effects the 1975 predictions had had. He said he thought it would be a grave error if the Society pushed strongly on their 1914 date; that the disillusionment resulting from 1975 would be nothing compared with what would come if the Society was forced to move away from that 1914 chronology. I acknowledged his assessment as undoubtedly correct but we went no further into the matter.

When Peter learned of our proposed leave of absence, he urged us to spend some time with them and fixed up a mobile home belonging to one of his sons for us to stay in. He offered to let me do yard work on his property to help cover some of our expenses and at the same time get some of the vigorous exercise that had been medically recommended for me at a recent physical exam.

Peter’s father had become one of Jehovah’s Witnesses when Peter was a small child, and from about the age of four he had been taken by his parents to meetings. As a young man he had become a full-time “pioneer” and even after marriage and the arrival of his first child he had struggled to keep on in that full-time activity, doing

janitorial work for income.²³ He had been sent by the Society into “problem” areas in Illinois and Iowa to help solve difficulties and build up certain congregations. In 1976 he was one of a representative group of elders invited to Brooklyn for discussions with the Governing Body.

A year or so after this seminar, however, he decided to relinquish his eldership. He had recently turned over the presidency of the grocery company to one of his brothers and had made use of his increased free time to do more Bible study. He was troubled by some of the organization’s teachings and wanted to reaffirm his convictions as to their rightness, reestablish his confidence in his lifelong religion. (He was then in his early fifties.)

The result was exactly the opposite. The more he studied the Scriptures, the more convinced he became that there were serious errors in the organization’s theology. This led to his decision as to ceasing his eldership. As he put it in talking with me about it, “I just can’t bring myself to stand before people and conduct studies on things that I cannot see have a Scriptural backing. I would feel like a hypocrite doing that and my conscience won’t let me do it.” Although when first hearing his decision, I had encouraged him to reconsider it, I could not deny the validity of his serious questions, and I had to respect his conscientiousness and his distaste for hypocrisy. He had reached his personal crossroads before I reached mine.

This was the man that organizational policy later categorized as a “wicked man” with whom one should not even eat and my having a meal with him in a restaurant in 1981 resulted in my trial and banishment from the organization.

It was in April, 1980, while we were in Gadsden on leave of absence that I first began to hear of what seemed to me to be strange occurrences back in Brooklyn. The expected storm had begun to break upon us.

INQUISITION

When he left the house, the scribes and the Pharisees began a furious attack on him and tried to force answers from him on innumerable questions, setting traps to catch him out in something he might say.—Luke 11:53, 54, Jerusalem Bible.

An inquisition, in the religious sense, is an *inquiry* into individuals’ personal convictions and beliefs.

23 He and his wife now have seven children and about seventeen grandchildren.

Historically, its aim has been—not to aid the individual, or to provide basis for reasoning with him—but to incriminate, to convict as heretical.

The initiating cause for the inquiry often has nothing to do with the individual's being disruptive, malicious or even being particularly vocal about his beliefs. Mere suspicion is sufficient cause to set in motion the inquisitory action. The suspect is viewed as, in effect, having no rights: even his personal conversations with intimate friends are treated as something the inquisitors have full right to delve into.

It was not solely the atrocious acts of punishment meted out in the Spanish Inquisition that earned it such a despised name in history. It was also the authoritarian approach and arrogant methods of interrogation employed to gain the incrimination so often zealously pursued by the religious judicial court. The torture and the violent punishment meted out then are outlawed today. But the authoritarian approach and arrogant methods of interrogation can still be practiced with apparent impunity.

I am reminded here of an article in the January 22, 1981, issue of the *Awake!* magazine, titled "Searching Out Legal Roots." It emphasized the superb legal precedents found in the Mosaic Law and, among other things, said:

Since the local court was situated at the city gates, there was no question about the trial being public! (Deut. 16:18-20) No doubt the public trials helped influence the judges toward carefulness and justice, qualities that sometimes vanish in secret star-chamber hearings.

This principle was praised in the Society's publication. In actual practice it was totally rejected. As Jesus said, "They say one thing and do another."²⁴ The "secret star-chamber hearings" were preferred, as the evidence clearly shows. Only fear of the power of truth prompts that kind of proceedings. Those methods serve, not the interests of justice or mercy, but the cause of those who seek to incriminate.

The *Awake!* magazine of April 22, 1986 also relates:

Anyone—man, woman, child or slave—could accuse a person of heresy, without fear of being confronted with the accused or of the latter even knowing who had denounced him. The accused rarely had someone to defend him, since any lawyer or witness in his behalf would himself have been accused of aiding and abetting a heretic. So the accused generally stood alone before the inquisitors, who were at the same time prosecutors and judges.

24 Matthew 23:3, *NEB*.

Four weeks after starting my leave of absence, while in Alabama, a phone call came from Ed Dunlap. After some general conversation, he told me that two members of the Governing Body, Lloyd Barry and Jack Barr, had come into his office and had interrogated him about his personal beliefs for about three hours. At one point Ed asked, "What's the purpose of this 'third degree'?" They assured him that it was not a "third degree" but that they simply wanted to hear how he felt about some matters.

They gave him no explanation as to what motivated their interrogation. Despite their claim that the discussion was simply informative, Ed's distinct impression was that it was the start of an organizational action that would prove both inquisitorial and punitive. Their questions inquired into his view of the organization, the teachings about 1914, the two classes of Christians and the heavenly hope, and similar points.

As regards the organization, he told his interrogators that his major concern was the obvious lack of Bible study on the part of the members of the Governing Body, that he felt that they had an obligation to the brothers to make such study and research of the Scriptures a primary concern, instead of allowing themselves to become so preoccupied with paper work and other affairs that Bible study got crowded out. As to 1914, he frankly acknowledged that he felt it was something that one should not be dogmatic about, and he asked them if the Governing Body itself believed this was something completely solid, certain. The reply from the two men was that 'while there were one or two who had doubts, the Body as a whole supported the date fully.' He told them that if others in the Writing Department expressed themselves it would be evident that almost all had different views on certain points.

On another day, Albert Schroeder and Jack Barr began a person-by-person interrogation of each member of the Writing Department. None of these acknowledged the uncertainty they felt about specific teachings, though in personal conversation virtually every one had some point that he had expressed a different view on.

The ironical feature of this was the diversity of viewpoint existing within the Governing Body itself, something that the interrogators themselves personally knew but never mentioned or acknowledged to those they questioned.

I knew that Lyman Swingle, the coordinator of the Writing Committee of the Governing Body and the coordinator of the Writing

Department, was away on a zone trip. I found it puzzling that such an intensive investigation should be initiated in his absence. Yet the Governing Body members doing the investigating had given no indication that anything out of the ordinary had arisen that should call for such a full-scale inquiry. From experience with the organization, I felt that this absence of any explanation for their action was indicative, not of something innocuous or benign, but of something that, when it came into the open, could prove quite devastating to those affected by it. For that reason, on Monday, April 21, 1980, I phoned the Brooklyn headquarters from Alabama and asked to speak to Governing Body member Dan Sydlik. He was not available, the Society's telephone operator informed me. I then asked to speak to Governing Body member Albert Schroeder, who was acting Chairman of the Body that year. He likewise was not available. I left a message with the operator that I would appreciate it if one or the other would phone me.

The next day, a call came from Albert Schroeder.

Before considering the conversation and the way he, as the Chairman of the Governing Body answered my questions, consider what I eventually learned had already happened and was in the process of happening at the time he talked to me.

On April 14, eight days before Schroeder returned my call, a Witness in New York named Joe Gould phoned the Brooklyn Service Department and talked to Harley Miller, a member of the five-man Service Department Committee.²⁵ He told Miller that a fellow employee, a Cuban Witness named Humberto Godínez, had told him of a conversation in his home with a friend who was a Bethel family member. He said that the Bethel family member expressed himself on a number of points that differed from the organization's teachings. Miller recommended to Gould that he try to find out from Godínez the name of the Bethel family member. This was done and the name of Cris Sánchez was supplied. Godínez also said that my name and those of Ed Dunlap and René Vázquez came into the conversation. Miller did not recommend to Gould and Godínez that they endeavor to clarify matters with those involved nor to seek a solution through brotherly discussion. Miller did not speak to Ed Dunlap who was well known to him and in an office just across the street from him. He did not make a phone call to René Vázquez whom he had known for years and whose services as voluntary chauffeur he regularly employed. He

25 This committee supervises the Service Department, at that time composed of a staff of about forty persons.

did not endeavour to contact Cris Sánchez who worked in the Society's factory and was accessible by telephone.

Instead, he first spoke to the members of the Service Department Committee asking them if any of them could supply any similar information. He then went to the Chairman of the Governing Body, Albert Schroeder.

He was told to arrange for Godínez and his wife to come to the headquarters for an interview with Miller. Nothing was said to Cris Sánchez, Ed Dunlap or René Vázquez, nor was anything communicated to me. The Chairman's Committee of the Governing Body evidently felt that to have acted in such a friendly way, thereby endeavoring to keep the matter from becoming a major issue, was not the desirable way to proceed.

During Miller's interview with the Godínezes, he suggested to Humberto Godínez that he phone René Vázquez and "tactfully" see if he would express himself about the matter. Miller himself did not see fit to do so, nor did he consider it advisable to phone Ed Dunlap or walk across the street to talk to him about the matter. The phone call to René was made and the apparent goal was achieved, René responded in a way that could be viewed as incriminating. Another interview with the Godínez couple was arranged, this time with the Chairman's Committee, composed of Governing Body members Schroeder, Suiter and Klein, present. This was held on Tuesday, April 15. Still nothing had been said to René, Ed, Cris or myself. The interview ran two hours and was taped. Through Godínez' recollections and impressions, they heard of his conversation with fellow Cuban and longtime friend Cris Sánchez, following a meal in the Godínez home. A number of controversial points were discussed. Godínez' presentation included numerous references to René, Ed Dunlap and myself. At the close of the taping, each of the three Governing Body members, Schroeder, Suiter and Klein, commended the Godínez couple for their loyalty and expressed (on tape) their disapproval of those who had been implicated by the interview.

Like Miller, the Chairman's Committee of the Governing Body had made no effort to talk to Cris Sánchez, about whom they had heard only hearsay evidence. They had made no effort to talk with René Vázquez, Ed Dunlap or myself, about whom they had heard only third-hand information. Yet the next day, Wednesday, April

16, 1980, at the regular Governing Body session, the Chairman's Committee played the entire two-hour tape of the interview to the Body (Milton Henschel, Lyman Swingle and myself being absent).

All this had taken place one week before Schroeder spoke to me on the phone, a phone call that he made only at my request.

It was after this playing of the tape to the Governing Body that the questioning of Ed Dunlap and, subsequently, of the entire Writing staff took place. It was that tape that motivated the questioning. The Governing Body members who did the questioning, Barry, Barr and Schroeder, knew that was the case. Yet they said nothing about it, even when Barry and Barr were asked by Ed Dunlap the reason for the interrogation. Why?

The action taken was swift, extensive, coordinated. Both Cris Sánchez and his wife and also Nestor Kuilan and his wife were now interrogated. Cris and Nestor both worked in the Spanish Translation Department where René served two days a week.

Harley Miller now phoned René and asked him if he would come to the office, saying, "We just want to pick your brains a little on some points."

The Chairman's Committee had arranged for investigating committees to be formed to handle the interrogation of these different ones. With the exception of Dan Sydlik, all the men on these committees were staff members outside the Governing Body. The Governing Body through its Chairman's Committee directed all the actions but from this point on remained in the background. They now arranged to have the various men serving on these investigative committees listen to portions of the two-hour tape that had been played to the Body so as to equip them for their committee action. That is why these committees subsequently used my name and Ed's name repeatedly in their questionings of Sánchez, Kuilan and Vázquez. Yet the Chairman's Committee had still not seen fit to inform *us* that the tape even existed. Why?

The objective of the investigating committees was evident from the direction their questionings took. The committee interrogating Nestor Kuilan asked him to describe his personal conversations with Ed Dunlap and myself. He replied that he did not think his personal conversations were something others had a right to inquire into. He made clear that if he felt that anything wrong or "sinful" had been said he would not hesitate to inform them, but that this was certainly not the case. His questioners told him he should 'cooperate or he would be subject to possible disfellowshipping.' His response was,

“Disfellowshipping? For what?” The reply was, “For covering over apostasy.” Kuilan said, “Apostasy? Where is the apostasy? Who are the apostates?” They answered that this was still being determined, but that they were quite sure that such existed.

This is somewhat like a man’s being threatened with imprisonment unless he cooperates by giving information about certain persons, and when he asks why, he is told that the imprisonment would be for complicity in a bank robbery. When he asks, “What bank was robbed and who are the robbers?” he is told, “Well, we don’t know yet what bank was robbed or who did it, but we’re quite sure there was a bank robbery somewhere and unless you answer our questions we will find you guilty of complicity and you will be subject to imprisonment.”

Nestor explained that he had studied in Gilead School under Ed Dunlap as one of his instructors and so knew him since then, and that he had known me from the time I served as a missionary and Branch Overseer in Puerto Rico. He acknowledged that he had conversed with each of us on occasion but that those conversations involved nothing sinful or bad and were his personal affair.

By April 22, when Albert Schroeder responded to my request and phoned me, the judicial machinery of the organization was in full operation and moving rapidly. As Chairman of the Governing Body he, better than anyone else, knew all these facts, for all the investigating committees involved were under the direction of the Chairman’s Committee.

He knew that his Committee had had the earlier-mentioned two-hour tape played to the Governing Body one week before his phone call.

He knew that the various investigating committees had all been “briefed,” hearing portions of the tape and that, at the very time he spoke to me, they were using my name, along with that of Ed Dunlap, in their interrogations.

He knew that the extremely grave charge of “apostasy” was included in the committee hearings. He had to know the very serious effect this could have on us two men he had known for decades, men he called his “brothers.”

What, then, was said to me in his phone conversation? Consider:

After a brief exchange of greetings, I said, “Tell me, Bert, what’s going on in the Writing Department?”

His reply was:

Well—the Governing Body thought it well that some of us make an investigation of the Department to see what could be done to improve the coordination, cooperation and efficiency of the Department—and—to see if any of the brothers had reservations on some points.

This final expression, as to persons having reservations, was stated in a rather offhand way as if of secondary importance. He had had a clear opportunity to tell me the facts as to what was taking place. He chose not to do so.

I then asked what reason there could be for such a full-scale investigation? He now had a second opportunity to give me an honest explanation of the situation. His answer was:

Well, the Department isn't operating as efficiently as it should. The book for this summer's convention is going to be late getting to the factory.

A second time he chose to give an evasive answer rather than a straightforward reply to my question. As to his statement, I replied that this was nothing new, but that the previous year both the *Commentary on the Letter of James* (written by Ed Dunlap), and the book *Choosing the Best Way of Life* (written by Reinhard Lengtat) had reached the factory by the first part of January, in good time. (I knew this since it was my assigned responsibility to see that these books were developed on time. The book for 1980, titled *Happiness, How to Find It*, was being written by Gene Smalley, who had never written a book before, and the project was not under my supervision.) I added that I didn't see why this should be cause for such an investigation.

Schroeder continued:

And then some of the brothers aren't very happy about the way their articles are being reworked. Ray Richardson said he had turned an article in [here he gave the subject of the article] and he was very unhappy with the way it was worked over.

I said, "Bert, if you know anything at all about writers you know that no writer likes to have his material undergo 'surgery.' But that is nothing new either, as long as there's been a Writing Department it's been that way. What does Lyman [Swingle, the Coordinator of the Writing Department] think about this?"

He replied, "Oh, Lyman isn't here now."

"I know he isn't there," I answered, "he's on a zone trip. Have you written to him?"

"No," he said.

I then stated, "Bert, I find this very strange. If, for example, Milton Henschel [the Coordinator of the Publishing Committee which supervises all factory operations] were away and another member of the Publishing Committee were away, let's say Grant Suiter, and reports came to the Governing Body that the factory there was not functioning

as efficiently as it should—do you think that the Governing Body would begin a full-scale investigation of the factory and its operations in the absence of those two brothers?” (I knew such an action would not even be contemplated.)

He hesitated somewhat and said, “Well, the Governing Body asked us to do this and we’re simply making a report to them. We’re going to make our report tomorrow.”

My response was, “Well, I’d appreciate it if you would express my feelings on the matter. I think it’s an insult to Lyman Swingle, to the man, to his years of service and to his position to take an action like this without consulting him or even letting him know.”

Schroeder said he would convey this expression. I added that if there was anything of genuinely great importance that required discussion, I could always go up there. He said, “You could?” I replied, “Of course I could. It would simply be a matter of taking a plane and going up there.” He asked if I could come the following Wednesday. I replied, “What would be the purpose if Lyman Swingle won’t be there then?” The conversation ended there.

The Chairman of the Governing Body of Jehovah’s Witnesses had had multiple opportunities to respond openly and honestly to my requests for information by saying, “Ray, what we feel is a very serious matter has come up and there are even charges of apostasy being made. We think you should know that your name has been involved and before we do anything we thought the only Christian thing to do was to talk to you first.”

He could have done that. Instead he said nothing, not one word, to indicate that this was the case. Of course, he could not very well have made the latter part of that statement since he and the other members of the Chairman’s Committee had already put into motion a large-scale operation of tapings, investigating committees and interrogations. The picture given me by the Governing Body representative was, plainly put, deceptive, fictitious. But I had no way of knowing then just how deceptive and fictitious it was. I soon began to learn, but primarily from sources outside the Governing Body.

If the conduct of the Governing Body and its Chairman’s Committee in this regard is difficult to understand, I consider it even more inexplicable—and unjustifiable—that they were not open and above board with Ed Dunlap who was right there at the headquarters. When he asked Barry and Barr what the purpose of their interrogation was, simple fairness should have moved them

to tell him why the Governing Body assigned them to question him, what serious, even grave charges were being made. Certainly Scriptural principles, including the statement of the Lord Jesus Christ that we should do to others as we would have them do to us, would have *demand*ed that someone say to his face what accusations of “apostasy” were being made behind his back. The ones who knew this chose not to do so at that time. They chose not to do so for *nearly a month thereafter*. Yet his name, like mine, was passed on to the members of investigating committees and then of judicial committees—to at least a dozen or more men—and *still* no one from the Governing Body approached him to tell him what grave charges were being linked to his name. *Yet many of them saw him on a daily basis*.

I do not understand how that course of action can be considered worthy of the name Christian.

On Friday, April 25, just three days after Schroeder’s phone call in response to my request, judicial committees, operating under the sanction and direction of the Chairman’s Committee of the Governing Body, disfellowshipped Cris Sánchez and his wife and Nestor Kuilan. René Vázquez and his wife were also disfellowshipped by another committee as was an elder of a congregation adjoining that in which René served. The names of all except the congregation elder were read out to the entire headquarters staff, stating that they had been disfellowshipped. The Governing Body thus informed well over a thousand five hundred persons. They did not see fit to inform me. I eventually heard it, of course, but from phone calls from those so treated, not from any of my fellow members on the Governing Body.

Diane Beers, who had been serving as a member of the headquarters staff for ten years and who was well acquainted with the Sánchezes and Kuilans, described her impression of the events of the week of April 21 to 26 in this way:

I think the thing that was impressed on my mind the most during that week was the cruel way these friends were being treated. They never knew when they would be required to go to a committee meeting. Suddenly the phone would ring and there would go Cris. Then he would come back, the phone would ring and there would go Nestor. On and on it went. They were kept constantly up in the air during that week. One day when I was talking to Norma [Sánchez], she told me that the committee

wanted her to talk to them without Cris there and she didn't know what to do. I suggested that Cris should be there at all times because otherwise she would never have a witness to what they said to her and how she replied. They could say anything, and she would have no way of proving that it was different. It was becoming apparent that they were trying to pit Norma against Cris.

Finally on Friday afternoon [April 25] at 4:45 p.m., the Committee came marching on to the 8th floor where we all worked and headed for the conference room that was directly behind my desk. Shortly, everyone began to leave work and go home, but I stayed around to see what the outcome would be. They called Cris and Norma and Nestor and Toni in and as they each came out, I went to see what the 'verdict' was. I remember that when I went into Nestor's office to talk to Toni and him, they told me I had better leave before I too got into trouble for being seen with them. I walked home by myself fighting all the way not to break down in tears. I was just devastated. I couldn't believe what was happening. It's a feeling I will never forget. This place had been my home for many years and I had enjoyed my time there—now it was like I was in a place totally foreign to me. I thought about Christ saying that by their fruits you will know them and I just couldn't reconcile what I had seen and heard about during that week as being Christian. It was so harsh and unloving. These were people who had given years and years of service to the Society, had good reputations and were much loved by everyone. And yet no mercy could be shown to them. It was incomprehensible to me.

I had a meeting that evening, but I refused to go as I was just too upset. Later on that evening when Leslie [Diane's roommate] had come home from the meeting, we were talking and we heard a knock at the door. This was around 11:00 p.m. It was Toni Kuilan: She didn't even get in the door before she broke down and just sobbed. She didn't want Nestor to know how upset she was. We all sat there and cried together and talked. We let her know that she and Nestor were our friends now the same as always and tried to encourage her as best we could. I couldn't sleep very good that night and got up once around 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning. I just sat in the bathroom thinking about what had happened and felt like it was a nightmare—it didn't seem real to me.

Saturday morning I went to see Nestor and Toni and Cris and Norma and when I got to Kuilan's room, they had just had a visit from John Booth [a member of the Governing Body]. He was sent to tell them that their appeal had been rejected by the Governing Body. The committee had told them Friday evening that they had to have the appeal in by that next morning at 8:00 am. This in itself

was ridiculous, but they complied and had an appeal in by 8:00 a.m. Booth was sent to tell them No. Nestor asked him why and he told him that he [Booth] was just a ‘messenger boy’ —he made it obvious that he did not want to discuss anything with any of them.

Here were people who had been associated for decades, had given many years of their life wholesouled and full time to what they believed was God’s service, and yet in the space of six days, from Monday, April 21 to April 26, all that was set aside and they were disfellowshipped. During that week, when Scriptures were employed by their interrogators, it was in an accusatory, condemnatory way, not in the way that the apostle Paul describes at Second Timothy, chapter two, verses 24 and 25, when he instructs:

And the Lord’s servant must not quarrel; instead he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will give them a change of heart leading them to a knowledge of the truth.—*New International Version*.

I believe it speaks poorly for any religion if it is unwilling to take time to reason with persons by means of God’s Word—not for a few hours or even a few days, but for weeks or months—when those persons question the Scripturalness of that religion’s teachings. When those being interrogated at the headquarters brought up Scriptural points, they were told in so many words, “We are not here to discuss your Bible questions.” Harley Miller told René Vázquez, “I don’t claim to be a Bible scholar. I try to keep up with the Society’s publications and that is about all I can do.” In the minds of the interrogators the prime issue was, not loyalty to God and his Word, but loyalty to the organization and its teachings. In this, as has already been shown, they had ample backing from the publications of the Society.

It can be truthfully said that none of the persons disfellowshipped had had any thought of separating themselves from Jehovah’s Witnesses nor had they any thought of encouraging others to separate. Their attitude is poignantly expressed in this letter written by René Vázquez in appealing the disfellowshipping action taken against him and his wife:

Rene Vazquez
31-06 81 Street
Jackson Heights, NY 11370

May 4, 1980

Judicial Committee
c/o Claudius Johnson
1670 E 174 Street Apt. C A
Bronx, NY 10472

Dear Brothers:

I find it necessary once again by this means to appeal to your sound reasoning and impartial judgement and see that we are not guilty of the accusation brought against us, my wife and I. We, in fact do not really understand or know who our accusers are.

During our hearing, time and again, we stated from the heart, in all truthfulness before Jehovah God that the very idea of promoting a sect or being apostate is utterly unthinkable on our part. Is this not borne out by my dedicated service to Jehovah God for the past 30 years, to the extent of giving minimal attention to my own family and to my secular work? Why should my recent actions in regard to discussing some Bible points in private conversation with some dear brothers and friends, all of a sudden be taken as an attack on the organization or as apostasy? Why should such extreme action as disfellowshipping be taken, when sound reasoning, kindness, true christian love and mercy, could mend and heal any misunderstandings or heartache that resulted from imprudent talk or repetition of things not in harmony with what has been published by the Society? Where is the evil, wicked person, the hater of Jehovah, the rebellious individual, the unrepentant doer of wicked acts that should be stamped out? Why should a legalistic definition of apostasy be used in such a cold and unmerciful way to condemn people who have done nothing but serve faithfully and pour out their souls in behalf of the brothers for so many years?

Who are the ones causing reproach on Jehovah's name and giving a bad name or image to the organization? Are not the drastic actions that are being taken, and the unloving methods being used, and the slanderous rumors being spread, and the lack of mercy and christian love, the suspicion, fear and terror of inquisitory investigations, multiplying a thousand times any misunderstanding or unintentional harm due to people repeating improperly some things said?

Brothers, there is nothing but love in our hearts for the entire association of our brothers, and in no way has my wife or I ever wanted to act with or had any evil design to cause confusion or disturbance of their faith. How would Christ Jesus handle a situation like this?

It appears that the main objective of the committee was to establish guilt by establishing that there was apostasy. In spite of our repeated expressions from the heart, that pursuing a course of apostasy is

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unthinkable, that such a thing never came into our heart, that charge continued to be pressed. The committee appears to have been committed to proving that we were apostates by showing that private personal conversations we had with some of our dear friends, were in fact part of an evil scheme to form a sect or cause a division by apostasy. In two different occasions Brother Harold Jackson used the illustration of a young girl who committed fornication, but the idea of doing that was so rejected by her mind, that she in fact believed that she did not commit fornication, but she was pregnant. The application would be that no matter how abhorrent is to us the idea of being apostates, that no matter if our heart and conscience tell us that it is unthinkable for us to do such a thing, still we are apostates.

But Brothers, we know the difference between our right and left hand. This is not the case of a young girl lacking in understanding and experience. But for the sake of argument, even if such were the case, that we are something that we are not, because we are not in our heart, mind and conscience, how would Christ Jesus handle the matter? Would he not extend his lovingkindness and mercy to that girl, so that sin may not rule as king because he died so that we may be shown mercy?

On the other hand, would it be the wisdom from above to use the example of that girl as a principle to judge another case where the girl is sure that she did not commit fornication but her belly is big? What if proper examination shows that she had a cyst in her womb, so that she was in fact telling the truth, but was so pressed by questionings and mental anguish that she would be made to suffer, and in addition to that, slanderous rumors would begin to circulate saying that she was pregnant, that she was going to have twins, that she already gave birth to triplets, and so on. Would that not be a great injustice? Who would be the ones causing the real harm? Would not the love and mercy of Christ Jesus avoid such a great injustice?

For this very same reason Christ Jesus told those who condemned him for doing works of healing on the Sabbath: "Stop judging from the outward appearance, but judge with righteous judgement."--John 7:24

Brother Episcopo, as one on the judicial committee, stated, by a number of leading questions, that an apostate could be very sincere in what he would be teaching, but he still was an apostate. The application would be that in spite of our continued expressions indicating that such an apostate course of action is unthinkable on our part, that we have never engaged in any evil design against the organization, nor in forming a sect, that we still are to be dealt with as apostates because of the things we discussed in our private conversations with our friends.

However, if we were to use that definition of apostasy, then we would have to conclude that our history as an organization as Jehovah's witnesses is full of acts of apostasy. When we were teaching that the invisible presence of Christ Jesus began in 1874, we were very sincere. But Jehovah knew that what we were teaching was not in harmony with Bible truth. Then he would have to have considered us apostates, by the definition put forth by Brother Episcopo. Time and again, as an

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organization we have taught, with godly devotion and sincerity, what resulted not to be in harmony with the word of God, and the faith of many was disturbed when things did not turn out to be the way we taught. Would it be in harmony with mercy and love to judge the organization as apostate on that basis? Would it be sound reasoning to put the organization in the class of Hymeneus and Philetus, who were subverting the faith of others, saying that the resurrection had already occurred?

The basis of the action against us is our having discussed certain points from the Bible with a few brothers in private conversation with them. One of the fundamental privileges each one has as an individual is that of talking confidentially to a friend or trusted person. If this privilege is taken away, or if we are told that we have to confess such confidential talk and then be judged on the basis of such expressions, or if the individuals we took into our confidence are forced by fear of action against them, to accuse us of talking to them, what sort of subjection are we demanding as an organization? Would not that become total subjection or absolute subjection? Would not that be in effect violating the headship of Christ Jesus over the congregation?

We can give various examples of such kind of conversations in the past on the part of many, including some of those in our committee, of things not published or taught by the organization. If I know of such conversations, how many more know or knew about them? To how many did they speak about those things? Should we now start an inquisitory investigation to determine that, and to argue that they are apostate? The very reason that I did not mention such examples, giving names, is that I know it would be unjust to do such a thing. We did not want to give the idea that we were pointing the finger at someone else. Are the brothers now to be under an atmosphere of terror so that the very mention of reading the Bible at home would be viewed as suspicious and possible apostasy, or should we say "heresy"?

In our hearing, when I expressed that we were very sorry for the disturbance that somehow was traced back to us due to a very imprudent repetition of some points to a number of brothers, and when we gave the assurance that we would in no way again talk about such things to others, but rather tell anyone who would mention such things that such talk should be stopped, brother Harold Jackson strongly stated that I had to give them some kind of assurance about that, and then proceeded to say that we were a danger to the organization, and to imply that I was following a pattern of covering up things, and that he did not personally believe what I was saying. What is the direction given in the Bible in this regard? How can that "assurance" be given? Even if there were valid reason for someone to be accused of promoting a sect, Titus 3:10 says: "As for a man that promotes a sect, reject him after a first and second admonition." The second admonition would be due to the individual's continuing with new offenses indicating that he insisted on promoting a sect. Even if we were viewed as that kind of persons, from the very first unfortunate misunderstanding, we have

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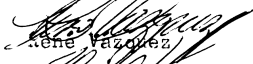
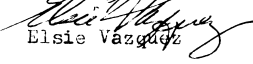
even become abnormally non-communicative in order to avoid any further misunderstanding. Since a mere verbal assurance would not be enough, as implied by the counsel of Paul, the conduct of the individual, not necessitating a second admonition, and then a re-occurrence of the wrong, would be the assurance needed. Even that benefit of the doubt is not given to us.

More than one time it was stated by Brother Jackson that the things commented constituted an attack on the very heart of the organization. But in the first place, such attack does not exist, and I personally do not know of anyone conducting an attack. Could it be that an expression is being used which was coined by an undiscerning person who made a hasty judgement and made a complaint? Should a statement, or hasty judgement like that, all of a sudden be taken as an absolute truth and measure everybody by that? Brothers, the extreme and strange actions taken in this situation are very disturbing and perplexing.

We appeal on the basis of righteousness and mercy, because we have been judged on a wrong we have not committed.

Be assured of our prayers to Jehovah for this matter to be clarified for the blessing of his name and the spiritual well-being of his people.

Your brothers,


René Vazquez

Elsie Vazquez

Some thirty years earlier, René had left his father's home to escape what he felt was an oppressively intolerant atmosphere, narrow-mindedness. He sought freedom to pursue his interest in Jehovah's Witnesses. From then on he had given himself, heart and soul, to service among them. Now, in the space of two weeks, he saw those thirty years set aside as of no particular weight, he was subjected to intense interrogation, his sincerity of motive was impugned, and he had been labeled a rebel against God and Christ. His letter voices his painful anguish on finding himself in the same atmosphere of religious intolerance and narrow-mindedness he thought he had escaped.

René was granted an appeal and again met with a committee (formed of five other Elders). Every effort he made to be conciliatory, to show that he was not seeking to make an issue of specific doctrinal matters, that he had no desire to be dogmatic about such, was rejected as evasive, as evidence of guilt.

At one point, after hours of being plied with questions, he was interrupted by Sam Friend, a member of the Appeal Committee (as well as of the Brooklyn headquarters staff), who said, “That is a lot of hogwash. Now I’m going to read this list of questions to you and I want you to answer them yes or no.” To René, whose native language is Spanish, the term “hogwash” was unfamiliar and, although afterward deciding it was simply some regional expression, he says that at the time it hit him with such a literal image of filth that something “gave” inside him and he responded, “No! I’m not going to answer any more of your questions. You men are trying to sift my heart and I’m not going to endure any more of it.” A recess in the session was called; René walked out and on reaching the street broke down in tears.

The committee upheld the disfellowshipping decision.

Of all the persons René had known and worked with in the Brooklyn Service Department, including those who had been willing to make use of his kindness and helpfulness over many years, not one appeared to say at least something in his behalf, to express any request for a similarly kind treatment toward him.²⁶ On the organization’s scales of justice his undeniable sincerity, his unmarred record of the past thirty years—none of this carried any weight if he did not totally agree with the organization and maintain unquestioning silence. Somewhere in all this it would seem that the words of the disciple James have application, when he writes:

Talk and behave like people who are going to be judged by the law of freedom, because there will be judgment without mercy for those who have not been merciful themselves; but the merciful need have no fear of judgment.²⁷

Finally, on May 8, 1980, the Governing Body officially informed me that my name was involved in all of this. A phone call came from Chairman Albert Schroeder and he said that the Governing Body wanted me to go to Brooklyn to appear before them. This was the *first time* they gave me any indication whatsoever of my being in any way under question.

Fifteen days had passed since our previous conversation in which the Chairman repeatedly evaded telling me what was actually taking place. I still was unaware of the existence of the two-hour taped interview or that it had been played to the Governing Body in full session. *Twenty-three days* had passed since that was done.

²⁶ While it is true that all these proceedings were carried on in “secret star-chamber” style, there were many in the Department who knew what was taking place, either through direct knowledge or by departmental “gossip.”

²⁷ James 2:12, 13, *JB*.

In those twenty-three days they had not only played that tape to the Governing Body but had played portions of it containing my name and that of Ed Dunlap to at least seventeen persons outside the Governing Body (those forming investigative and judicial committees), they had disfellowshipped three members of the headquarters staff and three person outside, one of them a friend of mine for thirty years, they had taped another interview with a man named Bonelli (a tape that will be discussed later), and in general had not only invited but had actively sought any evidence of an incriminating nature that could be obtained from members of the Bethel family or others, the threat of disfellowshipping even being used to extract information from some.

Only after all this did the Governing Body through its Chairman's Committee think it advisable to let me know that they viewed me as in any way implicated in what was taking place. Why?

What I knew I had learned entirely from other sources, not from the Governing Body of which I had been a member for nine years. The Bethel headquarters members who were grilled and put on trial had phoned me, voicing their dismay at the unkind, intolerant attitude shown. They expressed their belief that the ones directing the whole process were simply going through them in order to reach their true objective, Edward Dunlap and myself. They felt that such ones were taking what they considered to be the more strategic course of beginning with the "small people," the lesser known and less prominent ones, establishing their "guilt," making it seem as if the situation was of great and dangerous proportions, and then, having laid as strong a foundation as possible, proceeding to deal with the better known and more prominent ones. Rightly or wrongly, this was the impression they had. It would be interesting to hear from those of the Chairman's Committee, to whom all reports ultimately went and who answered all requests for direction by the investigating and judicial committees—to hear what possible reasons that Committee could have had for proceeding in the manner they did.

When Chairman Schroeder phoned me on May 8, I expressed my feelings, how difficult I found it to understand why, after living and working together, week in and week out, for nine years with the members of the Governing Body (fifteen years with some), not one of them had the brotherly considerateness to communicate with me as to what was taking place. (In all fairness to the members as a whole, it must be granted that they may not have known in detail how the Chairman's Committee was handling matters. They may not have known the content of Albert Schroeder's phone conversation with me

on April 23 and the misleading responses my questions received—though it seems possible, even probable, that the conversation was taped, as later developments would indicate. Either way, it must be acknowledged that some or many of the members may have expected and believed that the Chairman’s Committee was conducting matters on a high level, in accord with Christian principles, doing to others as they would have done to themselves.)

I then asked Albert Schroeder what his feelings would have been if, at the time he was in Europe conveying his thoughts of a different application of the critical phrase “this generation,” some in Brooklyn, on hearing of this, had brought accusations of “apostate leanings” on his part, and then had begun gathering together any other expressions he might have made anywhere at any time to anyone as evidence to substantiate that grave charge—and had done all this without even communicating with him to advise him of what was taking place. How would he feel?

He gave no reply. I told him I would go to Brooklyn as requested and the conversation came to a close.

By the time I arrived in Brooklyn on May 19, the continual toll on my nerves had brought me to a state of near shock. There seemed to be something so irrational about what was happening, the methods used. Some called it a “nightmare.” Others felt a stronger term was needed, namely, “paranoia.” Innocent Christians were being treated as if they were dangerous enemies.

Some time ago I ran across an item I had read and clipped years before from the *New York Times*. Headed “Mistrust Found in Nixon’s Staff,” among other things it said:

A psychiatrist on the White House staff from 1971 to 1973 says the inner group around Richard M. Nixon deeply mistrusted the motives of other people, viewed concern for people’s feelings as a character flaw, and could not respect loyal opposition or dissent.

“Dissent and disloyalty were concepts that were never sufficiently differentiated in their minds.” Dr. Jerome H. Jaffe said. “That really was the tragic part. To dissent was to be disloyal. That is the theme that recurred again and again.” . . .

“The Administration admired people who could be cold and dispassionate in making personnel decisions,” he said. “To make concessions to people’s feelings, to recognize that a particular objective was not worth destroying people in the process of its attainment, was not something that elicited any admiration. Such a concern was viewed as a fatal flaw.”

“They deeply distrusted the motives of other people and were unable to believe that people could rise above selfish motives,” he said.”²⁸

28 *New York Times*, January 12, 1976, p. 12.

I find a frighteningly close parallel between this and the attitudes shown in Brooklyn in the spring of 1980. Quoting from the above article, “To dissent was to be disloyal. That is the theme that recurred again and again.” The kindness of Jesus Christ seemed so seriously missing. Any warmth of friendship, and the compassionate understanding that gives friendship its warmth, seemed replaced by a cold organizational approach that assumed the worst, gave no benefit of doubt, and viewed forbearance and patience as a weakness, inimical to the interests of the organization, to its goals of uniformity and conformity. It was as if some massive legal machine had been put in motion and was grinding along in an unfeeling, unrelenting way toward its ultimate objective. I found it hard to believe it was actually happening.

On arriving at the headquarters, among other things on my desk I found an item prepared by the Chairman’s Committee back on April 28, 1980. (See the next page.) Some of the points were surprising to me, since I had never even considered them, much less discussed them with others. I was repelled by the dogmatic terms in which all the points were stated. And I thought the “Notes” at the bottom really presented the true issue. For those notes focused repeated emphasis on the “*basic Biblical ‘framework’ of the Society’s Christian beliefs,*” the “*‘pattern of healthful words’ that have come to be Biblically accepted by Jehovah’s people over the years.*”

This had a familiar ring, for it was an argument so frequently used in Governing Body sessions, the argument that long-standing traditional teachings of the Society must be adhered to, as if the years they had been believed necessarily gave proof of their rightness. Those traditional teachings, and not the Word of God itself, lay at the crux of the issue.

On May 20, I met with the Chairman’s Committee and they played me a tape of the report they gave to the Governing Body with regard to the interviews with members of the Writing Staff, and about the Chairman’s Committee’s subsequent steps in getting investigative and judicial processes in motion. They then gave me two tapes to take and listen to, one being the two-hour interview with the Cuban couple (the Godínezes) and the other a shorter taped interview with a Witness named Bonelli. I learned for the *first time* of the existence of the two-hour tape and that they had played it to the Governing Body over a month before. I find it almost ludicrous that after all the havoc that had been wreaked on people’s lives since the time of playing that tape, they were just now getting around to letting me hear it, *the day before* my hearing in a plenary session of the Governing Body.

(To Governing Body) RECENT EVIDENCES OF WRONG TEACHINGS BEING SPREAD ABOUT

Following are some of the wrong teachings being spread as emanating from Bethel. These have been brought to the attention of the Governing Body from the field from April 14 onward.

1. That Jehovah does not have an organization on earth today and its Governing Body is not being directed by Jehovah.
2. Everyone baptized from Christ's time (C.E. 33) forward to the end should have the heavenly hope. All these should be partaking of the emblems at Memorial time and not just those who claim to be of the anointed remnant.
3. There is no proper arrangement as a "faithful and discreet slave" class made up of the anointed ones and their Governing Body to direct affairs of Jehovah's people. At Matt. 24:45 Jesus used this expression only as an illustration of faithfulness of individuals. Rules are not needed only follow the Bible.
4. There are not two classes today, the heavenly class and those of the earthly class also called "other sheep" at John 10:16.
5. That the number 144,000 mentioned at Rev. 7:4 and 14:1 is symbolic and not to be taken as literal. Those of the "great crowd" mentioned at Rev. 7:9 also serve in heaven as indicated in vs. 15 where it is claimed that such crowd serves "day and night in his temple (naq)" or K. Int says: "in the divine habitation of him."
6. That we are not now living in a special period of "last days" but that the "last days" started 1900 years ago C.E. 33 as indicated by Peter at Acts 2:17 when he quoted from the Prophet Joel.
7. That 1914 is not an established date. Christ Jesus was not enthroned then but has been ruling in his kingdom since C.E. 33. That Christ's presence (parousia) is not yet but when the "sign of the Son of man will appear in heaven" (Matt. 24:30) in the future.
8. That Abraham, David and other faithful men of old will also have heavenly life basing such view on Heb. 11:16.

Notes: The above Biblical viewpoints have become accepted by some and now being passed on to others as "new understandings." Such views are contrary to the basic Biblical "framework" of the Society's Christian beliefs. (Rom. 2:20; 3:2) They also are contrary to the "pattern of faithful words" that have come to be Biblically accepted by Jehovah's people over the years. (2 Tim. 1:13) Such "changes" are condemned at Prov. 24:21,22. Hence the above are 'deviations from the truth that are subverting the faith of some.' (2 Tim. 2:18) All considered is this not APOSTASY and actionable for congregational discipline. See ks 77 page 58.

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I took the tapes to my office and played them. It made me feel ill. Everything was given such an ugly cast. I had no doubt that the Godínezes were seeking to repeat things as they had heard them, for I knew them and had always found them to be decent persons. But, as Harley Miller led them through the interview, I kept asking, "Were the things said to them actually presented in the extreme way that they here sound?" I was effectively cut off from determining this since the Chairman's Committee had already directed the formation of the judicial committees that had produced the disfellowshipping of those involved.

At the end of the tape, I heard the three members of the Chairman's Committee individually express themselves as though satisfied that they now had a clear picture of matters and, first, commending the couple interviewed for their loyalty, while, thereafter, condemning those implicated. This increased my feeling of illness. How could they do this without even having talked with Cris Sánchez? Why was he not there? Why was René Vázquez in effect "set up" by Harley Miller's suggestion (expressed on this very tape) that Godínez phone René and "tactfully" see if he would commit himself? What was the interest that these men had, what were they seeking to accomplish? Was it sincerely to help people, to understand their viewpoint and work toward a peaceful solution, to seek to clear matters up with a minimum of difficulty and hurt, through kind counsel, through exhortation to moderation and prudence if these were lacking—or was it to build up a case against persons? I found nothing in the entire tape to indicate anything but the latter goal.

If the contents of that first tape were bad, the second was far worse. The Godínezes had expressed their recollections of a conversation in their home and the way the things said had struck them and, as stated, I believe they did so sincerely. The second tape was filled largely with rumor. But the most disheartening aspect of the whole recording were the expressions made by the headquarters interviewers.

Bonelli was a member of a Spanish-speaking congregation adjoining that of René's. The tape began with Albert Schroeder introducing Bonelli as a man who had been a "ministerial servant" (or "deacon") in two previous congregations but who was not presently such. He quoted Bonelli as having said that he was not appointed as a ministerial servant in his present congregation because of an adverse attitude of one of the elders there, named Angulo.

Bonelli then gave testimony against this same elder that he said had contributed toward his not being appointed as a ministerial servant. (Angulo was one of those who was disfellowshipped.) He also said that after the Memorial service (the Lord's Evening Meal) at the Kingdom Hall on March 31, he had gone to René Vázquez' home where he saw René's wife and mother partake of the emblems of bread and wine.²⁹ Bonelli said he himself also partook of the emblems.

29 Previous to my departing on my leave of absence, René told me that he and his wife and mother all felt conscientiously that they should partake of the emblems. He said he was certain that if all three did so at the Kingdom Hall it would cause a lot of talk (it is rare for any of the Spanish-speaking congregations to have even one person professing to be of the "anointed" among them). He said he felt the course that would cause the least problem would be for his wife and mother to wait until after the congregation meeting and partake quietly at home. He said that Bonelli was not in their congregation and was not asked to accompany them home but asked to do so himself. (René's mother had at one time conducted a Bible study with Bonelli and knew him well.)

This last statement produced surprised comments from his interviewers, Albert Schroeder and, from the Service Department, Dave Olson and Harold Jackson. Bonelli went on to say in explanation, and I here quote his exact words as they are recorded on the tape: “I’m sneaky.” He said he had gone to René’s home to get information about them.³⁰

He went on to say that he understood from another Witness that the elder named Angulo had already obtained a building in which he and René would hold meetings, that they had already baptized persons in their new belief.

There was, in reality, *not a single word of truth* in those rumors. The interrogators did not ask where the supposed location of meetings was, or what the names of the persons supposedly baptized were. None could have been supplied if they had asked, for they did not exist.

Farther along in the tape, Bonelli had difficulty expressing one point in English and Harold Jackson, who speaks Spanish, had him state it in Spanish and then Jackson put it into English. Bonelli chuckled and said: “My English is not so good, but the information I am giving is.” Dave Olson’s voice then came in quickly saying, “Yes, Brother, you’re giving us just what we need. Go on.”

When I heard those words it was as if a crushing weight came down on my heart. In the whole interview, this man had not said one thing that could possibly be viewed as helpful if the aim was to try to aid persons who had a wrong understanding of Scripture. Only if the aim was to build up a case, to obtain incriminating, damning evidence, then only could he be said to be ‘giving just what was needed.’ But even the evidence supplied was half rumor, unfounded, utterly false, and the other half could be viewed as significant only if one upheld the view that a religious organization has the right to prohibit private conversations about the Bible among personal friends if these conversations do not adhere totally to that organization’s teachings, as also the right to judge the conscientious actions of persons even when done in the privacy of their own home.

At the close of Bonelli’s taped testimony, Dave Olson asked him if he could supply names of other “Brothers” who might give similar information. Bonelli had claimed that a large number of persons were spoken to about the “apostate” beliefs. He replied to Olson’s request by saying that he thought he knew a “Brother” in New Jersey who might be able to give some information. Olson asked his name.

30 I personally doubt that that was his motivation at the time.

Bonelli answered that he didn't remember but thought he could find out. Olson said, "But there must be many others who could supply information." Bonelli then said he thought he knew some "Sisters" who might be able to do that. What were their names? That, too, he would have to find out.

Albert Schroeder then expressed gratitude to Bonelli for his cooperation in testifying and counseled him to 'keep himself spiritually strong by attending the meetings regularly,' and added that if Bonelli heard any other information to come to them with it.

In my opinion, nothing expresses more clearly and forcefully the direction taken in the entire process of investigation, interrogation and ultimate condemnation than does this particular tape. I can think of nothing that would be more helpful to all of Jehovah's Witnesses everywhere to enable them to have a balanced, not a one-sided, view of what took place, the "climate" that prevailed, how the men connected with God's "channel" at headquarters conducted themselves, than for them to hear this tape and compare it with what has thus far been told them by the organization or what they have heard through gossip. But they should also have the right to ask questions as to what was done to verify the testimony of this man, to separate fact from rumor, and also the right to ask why this kind of testimony was viewed by the headquarters men as of such value, *"just what we need."*

The likelihood of the organization's doing that, allowing this tape to be heard (with no portions erased) and for questions to be asked is, I believe, virtually nonexistent. I personally think they would destroy it rather than allow that to happen. I still do not understand why the Chairman's Committee did not feel ashamed to let me hear it as they did.

The Governing Body had ample opportunity to know that within days after the disfellowshipping of the headquarters staff members, rumors of the same kind contained in this tape began circulating within the Bethel family. The "apostates" were forming their own religion, had been holding separatist meetings, baptizing people, their new belief went under the name of "Sons of Freedom"—these and similar expressions were common talk. They were also totally false. Governing Body members presiding at the morning Bible discussions made many comments about the "apostates" but did not see fit to expose the falsity of the rumors circulating.

Those rumors went unchecked and eventually spread all over the globe. Yet every Witness who passed these on was speaking, even if unwittingly, false testimony against his neighbor. The only ones in position to expose the falsity of those rumors and thus help stop the false testimony were those of the Governing Body. Why they did not

choose to do so only they know. I do not doubt that among them there were some who honestly believed that the things they were hearing were factual. But I believe that in their position and with their weight of responsibility they had an obligation to investigate and to help others to realize that it was not factual, it was fiction, and not only fiction but hurtful, even vicious, fiction.

I would not argue that errors of judgment were all on one side. I do not doubt in the least that among those of us “brought to trial” there were cases of injudicious statements. The evidence indicates that some of the most extreme statements were made by a man who, on being approached, quickly offered to become a ‘witness for the prosecution,’ testifying against a fellow elder. I do not personally know that man, have never met him, nor do I know the other elder. They are total strangers to me.³¹

I do not think it was wrong for the headquarters to make at least some inquiry into the matter as a result of the information that was brought to their attention. It would be entirely natural for them to do so. If they believe that what they teach is truth from God it would be wrong for them not to do so.

What I find very difficult to understand and to harmonize with Scripture is the *manner* in which this was done, the precipitous reaction and hastiness, the methods employed—covering over and withholding information from persons whose life interests were intimately involved, whose good name was at stake, the devious approaches employed to obtain damaging information, of coercion through threat of disfellowshipping to obtain “cooperation” in getting such incriminating evidence—and, above all, the spirit shown, the crushing despotism, the unfeeling legalistic approach, and the harshness of the actions taken. Whatever injudicious statements may have been made by a few of those ‘put to trial,’ I think the facts show them to have been far surpassed by the means used to deal with the matter.

As in the Inquisition, all rights were held by the inquisitors, the accused had none. The investigators felt they had the right to ask any question and at the same time refuse to answer questions put to them. They insisted on maintaining their judicial proceedings secret, entirely away from observation by anyone else, yet claimed the right to pry into the private conversations and activities of those they interrogated. For them, their judicial secrecy was proper, the exercise of “confidentiality,”

31 These elders were in the congregation adjoining the congregation René attended.

their evasiveness was simply being “practical,” strategic, but the efforts of the accused to maintain the privacy of their personal conversations was labeled as being devious, as evidence of a hidden conspiracy.

The investigators expected their own actions to be taken as evidence of zeal for God, for “revealed truth,” while at the same time they suspected the worst in all that the accused had done, made no allowance for their sincerity in wanting to put God first, or for their love of truth even when that truth was contradicted by traditional teachings.

When René Vázquez, for example, on being interrogated, endeavored to express himself moderately, undogmatically, to show that he had no desire to make flaming issues of minor doctrinal matters, and to make clear that he was not being insistent that anyone else see things as he did or adopt his views, he found that this was very unsatisfactory to the judicial committee members. They sought to pin him down on his inner feelings, his personal beliefs. As he put it, when a question from one direction did not accomplish this, then a question from another direction attempted to force him into some categorical reply. In his hearing before the first judicial committee, another elder, named Benjamín Angulo, was also “on trial.” Angulo was very positive, even adamant in many of his expressions. When René spoke in moderate terms, one of the Committee members, Harold Jackson, told René, “you are not even a good apostate.” Saying that René did not clearly defend his beliefs, Jackson continued:

Look at Angulo, he defends them. You talked to Angulo about these things and look how he now talks about them. He may be disfellowshipped, and yet you are not definite about these points.

In the second hearing with the appeal committee, as has been shown, René’s efforts at being moderate brought forth the expression “hogwash.” Mildness, moderateness, a willingness to yield where the issues permit yielding, these qualities do not make good evidence for disfellowshipping persons as rebellious “apostates.” Yet they are qualities that are part of René Vázquez’ nature, and those who know him know that this is true.

Two years after his disfellowshipping I talked to René about the whole affair and asked him how he now felt about having spoken to others on what he saw in the Scriptures. What would he say to someone who advanced the argument that, as in the case of someone working for a business organization, as long as he is part of that organization he should uphold all its policies and if he could not he should first leave before saying anything. His reply was:

But that is a business organization and I did not think of matters

in those terms. I viewed the matter as involving a higher relationship, one with God. I know what my feelings were then and what was in my heart, and no one can tell me otherwise. If I were in some scheme, why should I now deny it? When the hearings came, I prayed that I would not be disfellowshipped. Others did the same. Yet it happened.

If I had wanted to stay in the organization just to proselytize, I would now be a militant. Where is the ‘sect’ that I was working for? Where is the afterfact to prove that is what I was working for? To this day, even when people have approached me to talk with me, afterward I prefer to let them call *me* rather than take the initiative.

If I had it all to do over again I would be facing the same dilemma. I feel that so much good came from what I learned from the Scriptures, that it proved such a blessing to have things cleared up and brought me closer to God.

If I had had some ‘scheme,’ I could have programmed the way I would do things. But what I did was simply human and I was acting according to human reaction. That human element took precedence over fear of an organization. It was never my idea to disassociate myself from the Witnesses. I was just rejoicing in what I was reading in the Bible. The conclusions I came to were as a result of my personal reading of the Bible. I was in no way trying to be dogmatic.

The question I ask is, after all these thirty years as a Witness, the feelings I had of mercy and compassion—why were these not felt by *them*? Why the conniving way of framing questions? The hearings were held as if to gather information proving guilt, not to aid an ‘erring’ brother.

One rumor that circulated widely, in fact internationally, was that these three men (Vázquez, Sánchez and Kuilan), all of whom worked in the Spanish Translation Department, were deliberately making changes in material when translating and that I knew of this and had condoned it. (In French-speaking countries the rumor was adjusted to apply to French translation work.) René’s comments on this were:

That is ridiculous. It would have been impossible to do. There were no changes made and that never came into our minds. No one ever accused us of that. Everything translated had to go through about five different persons for checking, Fabio Silva being the last one to read it. In translating it was always necessary to strive to be faithful to the original idea.³²

Probably the most vicious rumor, passed on as “truth” by elders and others in various parts of this country, was that there was

32 Not only was everything checked by a number of different persons in Brooklyn, but a large percentage of Branch Office personnel in Spanish-speaking countries know English and read the publications in both languages. Had such charge of deliberate alteration been true, it would have been quickly reported. To think otherwise simply betrays an ignorance of the facts or a lack of concern for facts on the part of those originating and spreading the rumors.

homosexuality being practiced among the “apostates.” Where such a blatant lie originated is difficult to imagine. The only explanation I can think of is that, about a year before the inquisition tactics began, an organizational member in a position of considerable responsibility had been accused of homosexual tendencies. The Governing Body handled the case and endeavored to keep the matter quiet. Nonetheless, it seems that some talk did circulate. In the rumor mills this man’s actions were now transferred over to the “apostates.” This was easy to do since spreaders of rumors are seldom concerned about facts. I can think of no other possible explanation.

Why would people priding themselves on their high Christian principles pass on such vicious rumors when they had absolutely nothing but gossip on which to base them? I believe that in many cases it was simply because many felt a need somehow to justify in their own minds and hearts what had happened. They had to have reasons other than the true ones to explain why such summary and harsh actions were taken against people with unblemished records, people whom even their closest associates knew to be peaceful, unaggressive persons. To see the ugly label of “apostate” suddenly placed on these people required *something more* than the facts of the matter provided. Without such, those who knew these people, and others who heard of them, would have been obliged to face up to the possibility that the organization they viewed as God’s sole channel of communication and guidance on earth was perhaps not what they thought it to be. For many this was to think the unthinkable. It would severely disturb their feeling of security, a security that rests largely (far more so than most would acknowledge) on their unquestioning reliance on a human organization.

SANHEDRIN EXPERIENCE

Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.—1 Corinthians 4:2-4, New International Version.

When I arrived in Brooklyn, all the information that had been withheld from me was given in one large dose. The next morning I was due to appear before the Governing Body in full session.

Afterward, I could review it and see just what had been done, the program of action followed, the methods employed. But at the time

it only created a sense of shock. There was no opportunity to ask those involved about the accuracy of what was now given to me—they were already disfellowshipped, their testimony now unacceptable to the Body.

I still found it hard to believe that people, the people within whom I had my lifelong religious heritage, would ever do what I saw being done. My feelings on going to the Brooklyn headquarters were strangely comparable to my feelings when making trips to the Dominican Republic during the regime of the dictator Trujillo. In Puerto Rico, my point of departure, everything was so free and open, people on the street or in public conveyances talked with no sense of restraint. But as soon as my plane landed at the airport of what was then Ciudad Trujillo (now Santo Domingo), the change was almost palpable. People were so guarded in their speech, in public conveyances conversation was minimal, people were concerned lest any remark be taken as unfavorable to the dictator and be reported by the spy system that proliferated during that regime. Conversation and interchange of ideas that were viewed as completely normal in Puerto Rico were dangerous in the Dominican Republic, liable to bring upon one the label of an enemy of the state. In the one country, a man could express an opinion that differed from that of the majority and feel no sense of concern if he later learned that he had been quoted. In the other, a man expressing any thought that did not conform to the existing ideology afterward found himself engaging in self-recrimination, feeling as if he had committed some wrong, something over which to feel guilt, and the thought of being quoted was a foreboding one. In this latter case, the issue was not whether what one had said was true; it was not whether his saying it was honestly motivated and morally proper. The question was, how would it be taken by those in power?

Any feeling of this latter kind that I had had at the headquarters before the spring of 1980 had been only fleeting, momentary. Now it surrounded me, seemed overwhelming. The view those exercising governing authority had already taken was obvious from the “briefing” given me by the Chairman’s Committee, and by the remarks they and the Service Department men expressed on the tapes. In the highly emotional atmosphere and the climate of suspicion that had developed, it was difficult to keep in mind that what I or others had said could be viewed in any other light than the harsh way these men had expressed it. To keep in mind that what might be condemned from an organizational standpoint as heretical, could, from the standpoint of God’s Word, be right, proper and good, was hard to do, particularly after a life of intense service in the organization. I knew

that I had not sought out people to whom to speak on these matters; they had approached me and I felt an obligation to point them to God's Word for answers, even if the answers found there differed from those of men in authority.

I felt sure that by far the majority of the men before whom I would appear would see the matter from the organizational viewpoint only. If, from the start, there had been any other point of view taken, I was satisfied that the whole affair could have been quietly, peacefully and simply worked out, through friendly, brotherly conversation, encouraging moderation if any immoderate speech had been made, urging considerate restraint if inconsiderate restraint had been shown. By avoiding condemnatory confrontations, refusing to resort to high-handed methods and legalistic approaches, it would not have been necessary for private conversations and incidents that involved a small handful of persons to have blown up to such proportions that they became a *cause célèbre*, a full-scale affair with violent impact on the lives of many persons, one that produced reverberations and gossip on an international scale.

On going before the Governing Body, I felt no desire to add fuel to the fire already raging. It had already consumed some much-loved friends. I was willing to acknowledge that something I personally deplored—statements of an extreme or dogmatic nature—might have been made by a few of those involved, though I had no way of determining at this time to what extent this was true, for it related primarily to persons with whom I had had no Scriptural discussion, some of whom I did not even know.

On Wednesday, May 21, the Governing Body session opened with Albert Schroeder as Chairman. He first stated that the Chairman's Committee had asked me if I was willing to have the Governing Body's discussion with me taped and that I had agreed, with the provision that a copy of the taping be provided to me.

The Governing Body conference room contained one, long oval table capable of seating about twenty persons around it. The full Body of seventeen members was present. Aside from Lyman Swingle, who sat to my left, no member had conversed with me; the day before, no one (not even the member related to me) had visited me, either in my office or in my room. If there was any warmth or brotherly compassion in the Governing Body conference room, I failed to discern it. I felt only the feelings I had experienced when appearing in secular court trials of the past, with the exception that in those cases I felt freer to speak and knew that other persons were present who could witness what was said, the attitudes expressed. This instead was a closed

secret session; the attitude displayed seemed only to confirm what René Vázquez had told me of the attitude manifested toward him.

The Chairman said that the Body first wanted me to express myself on each of the eight points the Chairman's Committee had drawn up as evidences of apostasy (in their memo of April 28). I did, in each case endeavoring to be moderate, undogmatic, as yielding and conciliatory as I could be without going against my conscience by being either dishonest or hypocritical. The absolutist form in which the points were presented by the Chairman's Committee in their memo—as if one either accepted fully the organization's teaching on these points or else viewed them in the dogmatic way expressed in the memo—simply did not fit my case. None of their eight points expressed what I felt were the true issues. The issue was not whether God had an "organization" on earth but *what kind* of organization—a centralized, highly structured, authoritarian organization, or simply that of a congregation of brothers where the only authority is authority to help, to guide, to serve, never to dominate? Thus my response was that I believed that God had an organization on earth in the sense that He had a congregation on earth, the Christian congregation, a brotherhood.

The issue was not whether God had guided (or would guide) those forming this Governing Body, but to what extent, under what conditions? I did not doubt or question that God would give his guidance to these men if that was sincerely sought (I felt that some of the decisions made, particularly in earlier years, had been good decisions, compassionate decisions), but I certainly did not think this was automatic; it was always conditional, contingent on certain factors. So my response included the statement that I believed such guidance always was governed by the extent to which God's Word was adhered to; that to that extent God grants his guidance or withdraws it. (I think that that is true for any individual or any collective group of people, whoever they are.)

My responses to all the questions were made in this manner. If any of those accused had spoken about these matters in the dogmatic, absolutist way that the Chairman's Committee presented them, then I felt a desire to do whatever I could to restore a measure of reasonableness and moderation, to conciliate rather than exacerbate, and I bent as far as I could bend.

Other questions asked me were relatively few. Lyman Swingle asked about my view of Bible commentaries, from which I gathered that this had been a subject of discussion in the Body. I replied that I had begun to use them more extensively as a result of my

uncle's encouragement (during the *Aid* project) and that if the view was that they should not be used then there were entire sections of the Bethel library that would need to be emptied, since there were dozens, scores of sets of commentaries there.

Martin Poetzinger, who had spent several years in concentration camps during the Nazi regime, expressed dissatisfaction with my responses to the set of eight doctrinal points. How could it be, he asked, that I felt as expressed if these other people were making such strong statements? (As was true of the others, he had never talked personally to any of them.)³³ I answered that I could not be responsible for the way others might express things, and I directed his attention to Romans, chapter three, verse 8 and Second Peter, chapter three, verses 15 and 16, as examples of how even the apostle Paul's expressions were wrongly expressed or understood by some. Though I did not say so, I frankly felt my circumstance was like that described at Luke, chapter eleven, verse 53, as among men who were trying to 'draw me out on a great many subjects, waiting to pounce on some incriminating remark.'³⁴ The conduct of the Body during the preceding weeks gave basis for no other feeling.

Poetzinger went on to make known his view of the disfellowshipped "apostates," saying, with strong feeling, that they had shown their real attitude by "throwing their Watch Tower literature into the garbage before leaving!" (This was one of the rumors that circulated most widely in the Bethel family, in fact, it was reported to the entire Bethel family by a Governing Body member one morning.) I told Martin Poetzinger that I would never want to arrive at a conclusion when I had not talked with those involved to learn the facts. I said that in the fifteen years I had been at the headquarters it was a rare thing to go into one of the closets containing "dirt hoppers" without seeing quantities of Society literature—older magazines and books—discarded by members of the family; that, from what I knew, some of the disfellowshipped ones of the Bethel staff were departing by plane for Puerto Rico and that the heaviest items, and the most easily replaceable, would be such books. I repeated that I did not think it right to make a judgment on the basis of hearsay and that I thought it was especially unfitting for one sitting as a judge to do so. He stared at me but said nothing further.

Another question was asked with regard to the Memorial service (the Lord's Evening Meal) I had conducted the month before (April)

33 Lloyd Barry also expressed similar dissatisfaction, saying that I had "equivocated" on every one of the 8 points the Chairman's Committee had drawn up as proof of "apostasy."

34 *Phillips Modern English* translation.

at Homestead, Florida.³⁵ Was it true that I had not discussed the “other sheep” (those with earthly hopes) in my talk there? I said that was true, and related to them my experience the first year I had come to Brooklyn from the Dominican Republic. My wife and I had attended a Memorial service at a congregation that held this meeting quite early in the evening. Thus we returned to the Bethel headquarters in time to hear my uncle, then the vice president, give his entire talk. After the talk we were invited, along with my uncle, to the room of staff member Malcolm Allen. My wife immediately said to my uncle, “I noticed that you didn’t mention the ‘other sheep’ anywhere in your talk. Why was that?” He replied that he considered the evening one that was special for the “anointed” and said, “So, I just concentrate on them.” I informed the Body that I still had my notes from that talk by the vice president and had used them many times in conducting Memorial services. They were welcome to look at them if they wished. (Fred Franz was, of course, present if they cared to question him about his talk.) The subject was dropped.³⁶

My regret at what had happened, based on the premise that some persons had apparently been extreme in their statements, was sincere. I told the Body that if I had been informed I would have done all in my power to bring such to a halt. I did not deny that injudiciousness had been shown, nor did I exclude myself in saying this, but I stated that I felt it was wrong to equate what is injudicious with what is malicious. I expressed my respect for and my confidence in the Christian qualities of those I personally knew who had been so viewed and treated. I told them of what I knew of the thirty years of service of René Vázquez, his sincere devotion, his unblemished record in Puerto Rico, Spain and the United States. I also expressed dismay that, after having lived and worked with them as fellow Body members for so many years, not one of them had seen fit to communicate with me and convey the honest facts as to what was taking place.

Chairman Schroeder was the only one to respond. He quickly said, “But Ray, you didn’t level completely with us either. You didn’t say [in the phone conversation] how you knew about the investigation of the Writing Department.” I replied, “Did you ask me?” “No,” was

35 Jehovah’s witnesses hold this service as an annual celebration only, approximately at the time of Passover.

36 Typical of the rumors circulated (and I had questions written to me about this from as far away as New Zealand) was that I had given a talk encouraging everyone to partake of the emblems and that an entire congregation had done so (which would be a truly spectacular event for Jehovah’s Witnesses). The fact is, however, that at the talk I gave in Florida in April 1980, there were exactly two partakers, myself and a woman attending who was not a Witness but a member of a local church.

his answer. I said, "If you had I would have told you without hesitation. Ed Dunlap phoned me and mentioned it." Shortly afterward, Karl Klein, another member of the Chairman's Committee, smilingly acknowledged that "We didn't level fully with Ray," and added that "if René Vázquez had responded to the questions the way Ray did he would not have been disfellowshipped." Since neither Karl nor any other member of the entire Governing Body had made any effort to talk with René, to attend the first "investigative" interview held with him, or the first judicial hearing with him, or the appeal hearing with him, they could only judge his responses by the reports passed on to them by those who had carried out such activity for them. How they felt they could judge or compare on such secondhand basis I did not know. The Chairman's Committee, which included Karl Klein, had been willing to take the time to meet with accusers, to hear accusations brought, including the adverse testimony given by the Godínez couple and Bonelli, but they had *not found the time to talk to a single one of those accused*. I hardly find this an exemplary expression of brotherly love, of fellow feeling or compassion.

The majority of those on the Body simply sat and listened, asking no questions, making no comments. After two or three hours (I was too affected emotionally to be aware of the time) I was informed that I could leave the conference room and that they would get in touch with me. I went to my office and waited. Noontime came and looking from the window I saw Governing Body members walking through the garden en route to the dining rooms. I had no appetite for food and remained waiting. By the time three o'clock came I felt too drained to remain there and went to my room. The preceding weeks, the phone conversation with the Chairman and the shock that came on finding out how misleading it had been, the distress expressed in a flow of phone calls from those who were being subjected to intense interrogation and pressure, the rapidity and relentlessness of the disfellowshipings that followed, and, most of all, the continued silence on the part of the Governing Body as to informing me of a single one of the developments in all this, had now been culminated by my experience that morning, the coldness of the attitude shown, and the hours of waiting that followed. By evening I had become physically ill.

That same evening a phone call came to our room from Chairman Schroeder asking me to meet with the Body for an evening session of further questioning. My wife had answered the phone for me and I told her to inform him that I was simply too sick to go and that I had said what I had to say. They could make their decision on what they had heard.

Later that evening, Lyman Swingle, who lived in rooms two floors above ours, came by to see how I was feeling. I appreciated this and told him what a strain the period of many weeks had been. I stated to him that what concerned me most deeply was not what action the Body might decide to take toward me, but that beautiful truths of God's Word had been made to appear ugly. I meant that then and still feel that the most serious aspect of all that took place was the way an array of organizational teachings were used as a standard against which to evaluate plain statements in the Bible, and that those plain statements (because they did not conform to the organizational "pattern" of interpretation) were depicted as distorted teachings giving evidence of "apostasy."

I had in mind such plain yet beautiful statements of God's Word as:

One is your teacher, whereas all you are brothers.

You are not under law but under undeserved kindness.

All who are led by God's spirit, these are God's sons.

One body there is, and one spirit, even as you were called in the one hope to which you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all persons, who is over all and through all and in all.

For as often as you eat this loaf and drink this cup, you keep proclaiming the death of the Lord, until he arrives.

For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, a man, Christ Jesus.

It does not belong to you to get knowledge of the times and seasons which the Father has placed in his own jurisdiction.³⁷

By contrast, the eight points used by the Chairman's Committee as a sort of "Confession of Faith" by which to judge people had *not one single point* where the Society teaching involved could be supported by simple, clear-cut statements in Scripture. What plain statement in Scripture could anyone, Governing Body member or anyone else, point to and say, "Here, the Bible clearly says":

1. That God has an "organization" on earth—one of the kind here at issue — and uses a Governing Body to direct it? *Where does the Bible make such statements?*
2. That the heavenly hope is not open to anyone and everyone who will embrace it, that it has been replaced by an earthly hope (since 1935) and that Christ's words in connection with the emblematic bread and wine, "Do this in remembrance of me," do not apply to all persons putting faith in his ransom sacrifice? *What scriptures make such statements?*

37 Matthew 23:8; Romans 6:14; 8:14; Ephesians 4:4-6; 1 Corinthians 11:26; 1 Timothy 2:5; Acts 1:7.

3. That the “faithful and discreet slave” is a “class” composed of only certain Christians, that it cannot apply to individuals, and that it operates through a Governing Body? *Again, where does the Bible make such statements?*
4. That Christians are separated into two classes, with a different relationship to God and Christ, on the basis of an earthly or a heavenly destiny? *Where is this said?*
5. That the 144,000 in Revelation *must* be taken as a literal number and that the “great crowd” does not and *cannot* refer to persons serving in God’s heavenly courts? *Where do we find those statements in the Bible?*
6. That the “last days” began in 1914, and that when the apostle Peter (at Acts 2:17) spoke of the last days as applying from Pentecost on, he did not mean the same “last days” that Paul did (at 2 Timothy 3:1)? *Where?*
7. That the calendar year of 1914 was the time when Christ was first officially enthroned as King toward all the earth and that that calendar date marks the start of his *parousia*? *Where?*
8. That when the Bible at Hebrews 11:16 says that men such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were “reaching out for a better place, that is, one belonging to heaven,” this could not *possibly* mean that they would have heavenly life? *Where?*

Not a single Society teaching there dealt with could be supported by any plain direct statement of Scripture. Every single one would require intricate explanations, complex combinations of texts and, in some cases, what amounts to mental gymnastics, in an attempt to support them. Yet these were used to judge people’s Christianity, set forth as the basis for deciding whether persons who had poured out their lives in service to God were apostates!

The morning after my hearing before the Governing Body, Chairman Schroeder came to my room with a tape recorder to tape my response to some additional testimony from a staff member, Fabio Silva, who recounted things said to him by René Vázquez when René was providing him transportation from the airport one day. I said I had nothing to comment with regard to such hearsay evidence.

The morning hours passed. I felt a need to get out from the place and the oppressive atmosphere it contained. When I knew the lunch period was ended, I left my room and walked upstairs and was able to speak to Lyman Swingle as he was walking from the elevator to his rooms. I asked how much longer I had to wait. He told me a decision had been reached and that I would be notified that afternoon. His remarks gave me reason to believe that some members had pushed strongly for disfellowshipping and, while speaking with me,

his face suddenly became very drawn and he said, “I can’t understand how some men think. I fought, oh how I fought—” and then his lips compressed, his shoulders began to heave, and he began to sob openly. I suddenly found myself trying to comfort him, assuring him that it really did not matter that much to me what their decision was, that I simply wanted the matter to come to an end. Since his tears kept coming, I walked away so that he could go on to his rooms.

I know that there was no person on the Governing Body more devoted to the organization of Jehovah’s Witnesses than Lyman Swingle. I had felt admiration and affection for him because of his honesty and courage. I have no idea what his attitude toward me would be in the years that followed. It might have been totally opposite. I only know that, if for no other reason, I will always love the man for the sincere feeling he expressed that day in the hallway. In his sadness I found strength.³⁸



Lyman Swingle

That afternoon Chairman Schroeder brought the Governing Body’s decision to me. Evidently those seeking disfellowshipping had not attained a two-thirds majority, for he simply informed me that I was being asked to resign from the Body and also as a member of the headquarters staff. The Body offered to place me (and my wife) on what is known as the “Infirm Special Pioneer list” (an arrangement often offered to Circuit and District Overseers who have to leave traveling work due to old age or poor health). Those on this list report each month to the Society and receive monthly financial help, but are not required to reach any particular “quota” of hours in preaching work.³⁹ I informed him that neither of us felt we wanted to be under any arrangement that carried any obligation, even an implied one. He then made a few remarks about “what a marvelous piece of work” the *Aid to Bible Understanding* book had been. Then he left.

I wrote out my resignation, set out on the following page. I have not failed to do what I there said up to the present time.

38 In the months that followed, Lyman Swingle, though continuing as a Governing Body member, was removed from his position as the Coordinator of the Writing Committee and of the Writing Department, being replaced by Lloyd Barry. Lyman has since died.

39 At that time I believe the monthly allowance was about \$175 per person.

May 22, 1980

Governing Body

Dear Brothers:

By means of this letter I submit
my resignation as a member of the
Governing Body.

I will also be terminating my Bethel
service.

My prayers will continue to be offered
on your behalf as well as for Jehovah
God's servants earthwide.

Your brother,

RW Franz

My wife and I went away for a couple of days to get our emotions under control and then returned to move out what belongings we would take with us. I left the bulk of my files behind, bringing primarily the files on matters in which I had been most personally involved. I felt a need to be able to document my position on such issues should that position be misrepresented in the future, as in several cases it was.

On our return, I saw Ed Dunlap standing outside one of the headquarters buildings. He was to meet that day with a judicial committee.

Ed was now sixty-nine years old. The year before, in 1979, he had talked seriously about leaving the headquarters. He knew he had been the object of personal attack both within the Governing Body and outside thereof. At one point he had asked the Writing Committee to give him relief from harassment. The Writing Committee assigned three of its members, Lyman Swingle, Lloyd Barry and Ewart Chitty, to speak to Governing Body member Karl Klein (not then a member of the Writing Committee, though he became such after Chitty's resignation). They urged him to refrain from going into Ed's office and speaking critically to him as well as to refrain from talking to others about Ed

in such manner. This seemed to have effect for a time as to expressions outside the Body, though not within the Body and its sessions.

When, in late 1979, I informed Ed of our thoughts about leaving, he said that he had weighed the idea but had come to the conclusion that it was not feasible for him. At his advanced age and in his economic situation he did not see how he could reasonably hope to support himself and his wife. By remaining, at least they would have a place to live, food, and medical care when needed. So, he said, he had decided to stay and added, “If they give me too much hassle in the Writing Department I’ll just ask for a transfer to the carpenter shop or some other kind of work.”

Less than a year later he found himself cited for a judicial committee hearing. The day I saw him he said, “I’m going to be very frank with them. It’s against my nature to hedge.” He said he had little doubt as to what the committee would do.

It was now near the end of May. About six weeks had elapsed since the Chairman’s Committee had played the Godínez tape to the Governing Body in which Ed’s name was used several times. Nearly that length of time had passed since Barry and Barr had interviewed him, assuring him that they were ‘just seeking information.’ During all those weeks—although Ed Dunlap was right in their midst, even up to the very last working on a Governing Body assignment to prepare a book on the life of Jesus Christ—not a *single one* of the Chairman’s Committee approached him to discuss these matters with him, to inform him of the grave charges being made. These men were exercising full direction of the whole affair, they all knew Ed intimately, yet to the end they said not one word to him on the subject.⁴⁰

After Barry and Barr’s initial interview with him, for nearly six weeks *no one in the entire Governing Body* went to Edward Dunlap to talk about the matter, to reason with or discuss God’s Word with this man who had been associated for nearly half a century, had spent some forty years in full-time service, professed the heavenly hope, and was now nearly seventy years of age. They themselves are witnesses that this is true. How unlike the shepherd who would

40 Albert Schroeder had been a fellow instructor with Ed at Gilead School for many years; Karl Klein worked in the same Writing Department with him, his office being right next door to Ed’s; Grant Suiter, a year or so before these events, had come to Ed with an assignment he (Suiter) had received to prepare (an outline for one of the Branch seminar class discussions) and asked Ed to prepare it for him, saying that he was very busy and was sure Ed would “do a better job anyway.”

leave the ninety-nine to search out and help a “strayed” sheep, for such he was in their eyes.

Again, it may well be that some injudicious words had been spoken by a few individuals among those disfellowshipped. The above actions by those in authority, to my mind, spoke far, far louder than did any such words.⁴¹

A committee of five headquarters staff men was assigned to do the work of judging Ed Dunlap. The Governing Body remained in the background. All of the five men assigned were younger than Ed, none professed to be of the “anointed.” After just one day’s deliberations they arrived at their decision.

Fairly typical of the attitude shown were these expressions:

When asked about his views on the organization’s teachings about two classes of Christians, Ed called their attention to Romans, chapter eight, verse 14, that “ALL who are led by God’s spirit” are God’s sons. He asked, “How else can you understand it?” Fred Rusk, who had served as a Gilead School Instructor for several years while Ed was Registrar, said, “Oh, Ed, that’s just your interpretation of it.” Ed asked, “Then how else would you explain it?” Fred Rusk’s reply was, “Look, Ed, you’re the one that’s on trial, not me.”

When questioned about the organization’s forming of rules, he stressed that the Christian is not under law but under undeserved kindness (or grace). He said that faith and love were greater forces for righteousness than rules could ever be.

Robert Wallen said, “But Ed, I *like* to have someone tell me what to do.” Having in mind the apostle’s words at Hebrews, chapter five, verses 13 and 14, that Christians should not be like babes but like mature persons “who through use have their perceptive powers trained to distinguish both right and wrong,” Ed answered, “Then you need to read your Bible more.” Robert Wallen smiled and said, “Me and two million others.” Ed replied, “The fact that they don’t do it doesn’t excuse you from doing it.” He stressed that this was the major problem, the brothers simply did not study the Bible; they relied on the publications; their consciences were not genuinely *Bible* trained.

Evidently the major factor that developed in all the session was that on two occasions Ed had had Bible discussions with some of those who had now been disfellowshipped. The judicial committee had no evidence that this had been the case but Ed voluntarily offered the information, having said from the start that he intended to be perfectly open with them on all points. These persons had approached him and

41 1 John 3:14-16, 18.

on two occasions had had a meal with him after which they discussed portions of the book of Romans.⁴²

The judicial committee wanted to know if he would talk to anyone else on these points. He replied that he had no intention of “campaigning” among the brothers. But he said that if persons came to him privately seeking help and he could direct them to the Scriptures for the answers to their question, he would do so, would feel an obligation to help them. In all likelihood, this was the determinative factor. Such freedom of private Scriptural discussion and expression was not acceptable, was viewed as heretical, as dangerously disruptive.

One statement made seemed particularly paradoxical. Ed had told them plainly that he had no desire to be disfellowshipped, that he enjoyed the brothers and had no desire or thought of cutting himself off from them. The committee urged him to “wait on the organization,” saying, “Who knows? Perhaps five years from now many or all of these things you are saying will be published and taught.”

They knew the fluctuating nature of the organization’s teachings and doubtless on that basis felt they could say this. But how much conviction as to the rightness, the solid Scriptural basis for these teachings at issue, did this show on their part? If they were willing to accept the possibility that the organization’s teaching on these points might be no more solid and enduring than that, how could they possibly use them as the basis for deciding whether this man was a loyal servant of God or an apostate?

If they considered that these teachings (to which the Chairman’s Committee had attached such major importance) were so subject to change that it would be worth while to wait and see what five years would bring, why was it not also worth while to postpone any judicial action against this man who had given, not five years, but half a century of service to the organization?

The logic of such an approach can be understood only if one accepts and embraces the premise that an individual’s interests—including his good name, his hard-earned reputation, his years of life spent in service—are all expendable if they interfere with an organization’s objectives.

I feel sure that every man on that judicial committee recognized that Edward Dunlap had a deep love for God, for Christ and for

42 Ed was assigned by the Governing Body’s Teaching Committee to conduct a regular class on Romans for the Branch Committee members in their seminars.

the Bible—yet they felt they had to take action against him. Why? They knew the temperament prevailing within the Governing Body, expressed through its Chairman’s Committee. Organizational loyalty required such action by them, for this man did not, could not, accept all the claims and interpretations of that organization.

So they disfellowshipped Ed Dunlap, and he was asked to leave what had been his home at the Bethel headquarters. He returned to Oklahoma City where he had grown up and where, now 72 years of age, he supported himself and his wife by hanging wallpaper, a trade he had practiced before he began his 40 years of service as a full-time representative of the Watch Tower Bible and Tract Society.⁴³



Edward Dunlap and his wife

How those responsible—genuinely and primarily responsible—for all this can approach God in prayer at night and say, “Show us mercy as we have shown mercy to others,” is difficult for me to understand.

⁴³ Edward Dunlap continued secular employment up until he was 86 (though physically unable to keep up his wallpaper hanging work). He died on September 1, 1999 at the age of 88.